

Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11) EP 1 296 296 A2

(12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
26.03.2003 Bulletin 2003/13

(51) Int Cl.7: G07F 17/32

(21) Application number: 02020894.8

(22) Date of filing: 18.09.2002

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR
IE IT LI LU MC NL PT SE SK TR
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(72) Inventors:
• Glavich, Paulina
Reno, Nevada 89502 (US)
• Kaminkow, Joseph E.
Reno, Nevada 89509 (US)
• Baerlocher, Anthony J.
Reno, Nevada 89509 (US)

(30) Priority: 21.09.2001 US 960883

(71) Applicant: IGT
Reno, Nevada 89521 (US)

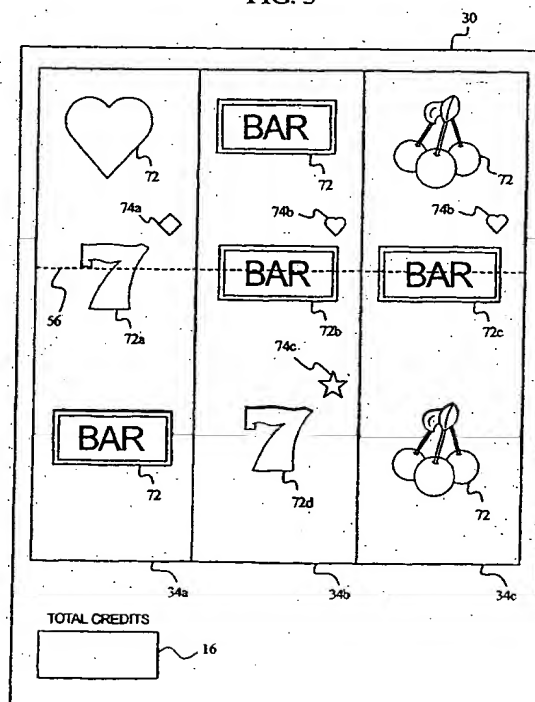
(74) Representative:
Manitz, Finsterwald & Partner GbR
Postfach 31 02 20
80102 München (DE)

(54) Gaming device

(57) The present invention provides a gaming device having wild indicator symbols associated with symbols displayed within a display device on a set of reels. The wild indicator symbols may also be associated with a card or plurality of cards within a display device. A

processor determines whether the wild indicators will be associated with the symbols or cards and also determines if the wild indicators will be activated. If the wild indicators are activated, the processor transforms those symbols or cards associated with the wild indicators into wild symbols or wild cards.

FIG. 3



EP 1 296 296 A2

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Gaming devices are well known. Many known gaming devices provide wild symbols or wild cards. Wild symbols provide a player with an additional opportunity to obtain winning combinations. The use of wild symbols, wild cards or wild indicators in gaming devices provide additional excitement and entertainment for players.

[0002] In a slot machine having reels, a wild symbol can enable the matching of symbols along a payline to achieve a combination. For example, in a three reel slot machine, the symbols along a payline on the first, second and third reels may be, respectively, a heart, a heart and a wild symbol. If, in the gaming scheme, the gaming device awards a player for a three heart combination, the wild symbol substitutes for a heart and provides the player with that combination.

[0003] In a video poker game, a wild symbol substitutes for a card. For example, in a five card draw poker gaming machine where the gaming device displays five cards, the cards can be a 10, Jack, Queen, King and wild card. The wild card substitutes as an Ace and provides the player with a winning combination.

[0004] Wild cards have been employed in gaming devices in other manners. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,431,408 discloses a gaming device having a video poker gaming scheme. A player is dealt a hand consisting of five cards. The player is also given a wild card. The wild card is separate from the dealt hand. The player can reserve the wild card for use with a subsequent hand. Thus, the player can use the wild card in a hand in which it is most advantageous to do so.

[0005] In another example, U.S. Patent No. 6,089,977 discloses a gaming device having a roaming wild symbol. More specifically, the patent discloses a gaming device having a plurality of virtual reels which have a set of symbols. Certain symbol combinations serve as triggering events. When one of these combinations occur on the reels, a wild card symbol appears on the reels in the form of a graphical image and moves along the reels. As the wild card symbol moves from one symbol or location to adjacent symbols or locations, the symbols transform into the wild card symbol. After each move of the wild card symbol, the gaming device determines and pays the player for any winning combination which is the result of the transformation. When the wild card symbol moves to the next adjacent symbol, the symbol previously transformed reverts to its original state.

[0006] To increase player enjoyment and excitement, it is desirable to provide gaming devices having new and different wild symbol, wild indicator and wild card schemes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present invention provides a gaming device having at least one and preferably, a plurality, of wild indicators associated with one or more symbols on a set of reels or cards in a set of cards. The wild indicators are displayed adjacent to one, some or all of the symbols on a set of reels or cards displayed by a display device. The processor of the gaming device randomly determines if none, one or more of the wild indicators will be activated. If a wild indicator is activated, the processor transforms the symbols or cards associated with the wild indicators into wild symbols or wild cards.

[0008] In one embodiment, the gaming device includes a set of reels having a plurality of reel symbols such as hearts, cherries, numbers, and any other suitable symbols. The gaming device includes a display device for displaying a plurality of symbols and at least one payline. The reels also include one or more wild indicators adapted to be associated with one or more symbols on the reels. The wild indicators can be similar to the types of symbols described above, or can be any other type of symbol suitable for use in gaming devices. The wild indicators are preferably displayed adjacent to the symbols although the wild indicators could be displayed on the symbols or otherwise related to the symbols. In one embodiment, the wild indicators are displayed above and to the side of the symbols.

[0009] A player uses conventional control features of the gaming device to activate or spin the reels. When the reels are activated, the processor determines which, if any, wild indicators will be associated with one or more of the symbols and which, if any, wild indicators associated with the reel symbol will be activated. An association probability for each wild indicator is stored within the processor. The processor associates a wild indicator with a symbol based on the association probability for that wild indicator. In addition, an activation probability for each wild indicator is stored within the processor. The processor determines whether a wild indicator associated with a symbol will be activated based on the activation probability of that wild indicator. If a wild indicator is activated, the symbol associated with that wild indicator is transformed into a wild symbol. The symbol then substitutes for any other symbol or a sub-group or limited number of the other symbols used by the gaming device along any payline.

[0010] The processor determines which indicator will be wild in a predetermined or random order when the reels are activated. The wild indicator can have a plurality of characteristics. For example, the indicators can have different colors, sizes, etc. The processor selects the particular characteristic of a wild indicator to determine which indicators will be activated. If more than one wild indicator displayed within the display device is activated, the processor transforms the associated symbols into wild symbols simultaneously, successively, or in any combination thereof.

[0011] For example, within a display device a first reel has a blue cherry wild indicator and a second reel has a blue diamond wild indicator. If the processor determines that all blue indicators are activated, then the processor transforms the symbols associated with those wild indicators into wild symbols either simultaneously, successively, or in any combination thereof. In the same example, if a red cherry wild indicator was displayed with a symbol, and the processor determined that all cherry indicators were activated, then the processor transforms the symbols associated with those wild indicators into wild symbols either simultaneously, successively, or in any combination thereof.

[0012] In another embodiment, the display device displays at least one wild indicator on a card in a video poker game. Prior to dealing the cards, the processor determines if one or more wild indicators will be associated with the card and which wild indicators, if any, to activate. The card having the wild indicator that is activated transforms into a wild card.

[0013] If more than one card has a wild indicator which is activated, the processor can transform the cards into wild cards simultaneously, successively, or in any combination thereof.

[0014] It is therefore an advantage of the present invention to provide a gaming device having wild indicators associated with symbols or cards wherein the wild indicators are activated to provide wild symbols or wild cards.

[0015] Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed disclosure, taken in conjunction with the accompanying sheets of drawings, wherein like numerals refer to like parts, elements, components, steps and processes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0016] Figs. 1A and 1B are perspective views of alternate embodiments of the gaming device of the present invention.

[0017] Fig. 2 is a schematic block diagram of the electronic configuration of one embodiment of the gaming device of the present invention.

[0018] Fig. 3 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels having symbols and wild indicators.

[0019] Fig. 4 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols.

[0020] Fig. 5 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols.

[0021] Figs. 6A and 6B are front elevation views of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols successively.

[0022] Fig. 7 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels having symbols and wild

indicators.

[0023] Fig. 8 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols.

5 [0024] Fig. 9 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols.

[0025] Figs. 10A, 10B and 10C are front elevation views of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols successively.

[0026] Figs. 11A, 11B and 11C are front elevation views of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols successively.

15 [0027] Fig. 12 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of reels in which certain symbols are transformed into wild symbols.

[0028] Fig. 13 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of cards.

20 [0029] Fig. 14 is a front elevation view of a display device in which a card is transformed into a wild card.

[0030] Fig. 15 is a front elevation view of a display device displaying a set of cards.

25 [0031] Fig. 16 is a front elevation view of a display device in which certain cards are transformed into wild cards.

[0032] Figs. 17A and 17B are front elevation views of a display device in which certain cards are transformed into wild cards successively.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Gaming Device and Electronics

35

[0033] Referring now to the drawings, and in particular to Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10a and gaming device 10b illustrate two possible cabinet styles and display arrangements and are collectively referred to herein as gaming device 10. The present invention includes the game, described below, being a stand alone game or a bonus or secondary game that coordinates with a base game. When the game of the present invention is a bonus game, gaming device 10 can be a slot machine having the controls, displays and features of a conventional slot machine, or another game such as a video card game such as poker. The player can operate the gaming device while standing or sitting. Gaming device 10 also includes being a pub-style or table-top game (not shown), which a player operates while sitting.

45 [0034] The gaming device 10 may include any bonus triggering events, bonus games as well as any progressive game coordinating with the base game. The symbols and indicia used for any of the base, bonus and progressive games include mechanical, electrical or video symbols and indicia.

55 [0035] In a stand alone or a bonus embodiment, the gaming device 10 includes monetary input devices.

Figs. 1A and 1B illustrate a coin slot 12 for coins or tokens and/or a payment acceptor 14 for cash money. The payment acceptor 14 also includes other devices for accepting payment, such as readers or validators for credit cards, debit cards or smart cards, tickets, notes, etc. When a player inserts money in gaming device 10, a number of credits corresponding to the amount deposited is shown in a credit display 16. After depositing the appropriate amount of money, a player can begin the game by pulling arm 18 or pushing play button 20. Play button 20 can be any play activator used by the player which starts any game or sequence of events in the gaming device.

[0036] As shown in Figs. 1A and 1B, gaming device 10 also includes a bet display 22 and a bet one button 24. The player places a bet by pushing the bet one button 24. The player can increase the bet by one credit each time the player pushes the bet one button 24. When the player pushes the bet one button 24, the number of credits shown in the credit display 16 decreases by one, and the number of credits shown in the bet display 22 increases by one. At any time during the game, a player may "cash out" by pushing a cash out button 26 to receive coins or tokens in the coin payout tray 28 or other forms of payment, such as an amount printed on a ticket or credited to a credit card, debit card or smart card.

[0037] Gaming device 10 also includes one or more display devices. The embodiment shown in Fig. 1A includes a central display device 30, and the alternative embodiment shown in Fig. 1B includes a central display device 30 as well as an upper display device 32. The display devices display any visual representation or exhibition, including but not limited to movement of physical objects such as mechanical reels and wheels, dynamic lighting and video images. The display device includes any viewing surface such as glass, a video monitor or screen, a liquid crystal display or any other static or dynamic display mechanism. In a video poker, blackjack or other card gaming machine primary game embodiment, the display device includes displaying one or more cards.

[0038] The slot machine base game of gaming device 10 preferably displays a plurality of reels 34, preferably three to five reels 34, in mechanical or video form on one or more of the display devices. Each reel 34 displays a plurality of indicia such as bells, hearts, fruits, numbers, letters, bars or other images which preferably correspond to a theme associated with the gaming device 10. If the reels 34 are in video form, the display device displaying the video reels 34 is preferably a video monitor. Each base game, especially in the slot machine base game of the gaming device 10, includes speakers 36 for making sounds or playing music.

[0039] Referring now to Fig. 2, a general electronic configuration of the gaming device 10 for the stand alone and bonus embodiments described above preferably includes: a processor 38; a memory device 40 for

storing program code or other data; a central display device 30; an upper display device 32; a sound card 42; a plurality of speakers 36; and one or more input devices 44. The processor 38 is preferably a microprocessor or microcontroller-based platform which is capable of displaying images, symbols and other indicia such as images of people, characters, places, things and faces of cards. The memory device 40 includes random access memory (RAM) 46 for storing event data or other data generated or used during a particular game. The memory device 40 also includes read only memory (ROM) 48 for storing program code, which controls the gaming device 10 so that it plays a particular game in accordance with applicable game rules and pay tables.

[0040] As illustrated in Fig. 2, the player preferably uses the input devices 44 to input signals into gaming device 10. In the slot machine base game, the input devices 44 include the pull arm 18, play button 20, the bet one button 24 and the cash out button 26. A touch screen 50 and touch screen controller 52 are connected to a video controller 54 and processor 38. The terms "computer" or "controller" are used herein to refer collectively to the processor 38, the memory device 40, the sound card 42, the touch screen controller and the video controller 54.

[0041] In certain instances, it is preferable to use a touch screen 50 and an associated touch screen controller 52 instead of a conventional video monitor display device. The touch screen enables a player to input decisions into the gaming device 10 by sending a discrete signal based on the area of the touch screen 50 that the player touches or presses. As further illustrated in Fig. 2, the processor 38 connects to the coin slot 12 or payment acceptor 14, whereby the processor 38 requires a player to deposit a certain amount of money in to start the game.

[0042] It should be appreciated that although a processor 38 and memory device 40 are preferable implementations of the present invention, the present invention also includes being implemented via one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC's), one or more hard-wired devices, or one or more mechanical devices (collectively referred to herein as a "processor"). Furthermore, although the processor 38 and memory device 40 preferably reside in each gaming device 10 unit, the present invention includes providing some or all of their functions at a central location such as a network server for communication to a playing station such as over a local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), Internet connection, microwave link, and the like.

[0043] With reference to the slot machine base game of Figs. 1A and 1B, to operate the gaming device 10, the player inserts the appropriate amount of tokens or money in the coin slot 12 or the payment acceptor 14 and then pulls the arm 18 or pushes the play button 20. The reels 34 then begin to spin. Eventually, the reels 34 come to a stop. As long as the player has credits re-

maining, the player can spin the reels 34 again. Depending upon where the reels 34 stop, the player may or may not win additional credits.

Wild Indicators

[0044] In one embodiment of the present invention which may be implemented as a primary game or a bonus or secondary game in a gaming device, a display device displays three reels 34a, 34b and 34c, as illustrated in Fig. 3. The reels have symbols 72. The symbols can be any symbols such as cherries, hearts, diamonds, numbers, or other symbols suitable for use in gaming devices. The reels also include one or more wild indicators 74a, 74b and 74c. The wild indicators may be similar to the types of symbols mentioned above. In the primary embodiment, the processor randomly determines which, if any, wild indicators will be associated with which symbol each time the game is activated. In an alternative embodiment, one or more wild indicators are permanently associated with one or more symbols.

[0045] The wild indicators are positioned adjacent to the symbols. In one embodiment, the indicators are positioned above and to the side of the symbols, as illustrated in Fig. 3. It should be appreciated that the wild indicators could be associated with one symbol on one reel, one symbol on each of a plurality of reels, one symbol on each reel, a plurality of symbols on one reel, a plurality of symbols on each of a plurality of reels, and a plurality of symbols on a plurality of reels. It should be appreciated that the wild indicators could take other forms such as being indicated to the player by different lighting patterns.

[0046] After a player makes a wager, the player uses the control features of the gaming device to activate or spin the reels. When the reels are activated, the processor determines which, if any, wild indicators will be associated with the symbols and which, if any, of such wild indicators within the display device will be activated. The processor can choose which wild indicators, if any, are to be activated in a random or predetermined manner. If the wild indicators are chosen in a random manner, an association probability for each wild indicator is stored within the processor. The processor then associates a wild indicator with a symbol based on the association probability for that wild indicator. It should be appreciated that the association probability for one wild indicator may be higher than the association probability for another wild indicator. The processor may also choose which wild indicators are activated in a random manner. Accordingly, an activation probability for each wild indicator is stored within the processor. The processor then determines whether a wild indicator associated with a symbol will be activated based on the activation probability of that wild indicator. It should be appreciated that certain wild indicators may have a greater probability of being activated than other wild indicators.

[0047] In one example, illustrated in Fig. 3, the first

reel 34a includes a "7" symbol 72a and a wild indicator 74a in the form of a diamond along the middle payline 56. The second reel 34b includes a BAR symbol 72b and a different wild indicator 74b in the form of a heart. The third reel 34c includes a BAR symbol 72c and a second heart wild indicator 74b.

[0048] If the processor determines that diamond wild indicators 74a are to be activated, the processor transforms the symbol(s) associated with the diamond wild indicator into a wild symbol, as illustrated in Fig. 4. The "7" symbol 72a becomes a wild symbol 76a and substitutes as a BAR symbol, giving the player three BAR symbols along a payline and a win (i.e., in conventional slot machines, the combination of three BARS is a winning outcome). It should be appreciated that the processor can transform symbols into wild symbols for winning combinations along any active payline used by the gaming device.

[0049] If the processor determines that heart wild indicators 74b are to be activated, the processor transforms the symbols 72b and 72c associated with the heart wild indicators on the second and third reels into wild symbols 76b and 76c. The symbols can be transformed simultaneously or successively. If the symbols are transformed simultaneously, the BAR symbols become wild and substitute as "7" symbols, giving the player three "7s" and a win, as illustrated in Fig. 5.

[0050] In an embodiment in which the processor transforms the symbols successively, a first symbol transforms into a wild symbol. The gaming device awards the player for any winning combinations in connection with the first symbol. That symbol then transforms into its original state before or when a second symbol transforms into a wild symbol. In the above example, if the symbols are transformed successively, the BAR symbol 72b on the second reel 34b becomes a wild symbol 76b and can substitute for the "7" symbol or can remain unchanged, as illustrated in Fig. 6A. This can also occur for the BAR symbol 72c on the third reel 34c, as illustrated in Fig. 6B. It should be appreciated that the symbols can transform in any order when transforming successively.

[0051] The processor may signal to the player that a symbol has transformed into a wild symbol in any suitable manner. In one embodiment, the symbol changes into a symbol displaying a word such as "WILD" as illustrated and described above. In another embodiment, the speakers emit a sound or message indicating the transformation of the symbol. In an embodiment in which the reels are mechanical, backlighting or other lighting can be used to indicate activation of wild indicators and/or the transformation of symbols into wild symbols. Moreover, any type of audio message or visual display is contemplated for indicating the transformation of the symbols. The processor then awards the player for any winning combinations along any paylines. The player's credit amount is shown in a credit display 16.

[0052] In one embodiment, the processor activates a

plurality of wild indicator symbols along multiple paylines. In one example, illustrated in Fig. 7, a gaming device has a set of reels 34a, 34b and 34c, having a plurality of symbols displayed within a display device. The reels have a plurality of wild indicators 75a, 75b and 75c associated with a plurality of the symbols. The processor activates all wild indicators 75a in the form of a star. The processor then transforms all symbols associated with the star wild indicators into wild symbols 77a, 77b and 77f. The symbols transform simultaneously, as illustrated in Fig. 8. The player has three hearts along the top payline displayed within the display device. Along the bottom payline 56e, the player receives two cherries and two BARs, and along the payline 56b, the player receives two cherries and two "7s". Thus, the player receives no additional award (except if one or more cherries provide an award as in many conventional slot machines).

[0053] In another example, the processor activates all diamond wild indicators 75b. The processor transforms those symbols associated with the diamond wild indicators into wild symbols 77c, 77e and 77g simultaneously as illustrated in Fig. 9: The player receives three "7" symbols along a diagonal payline 56b. In addition, the player receives three heart symbols along the diagonal payline 56c.

[0054] In another example, the processor activates the star wild indicators 75a and successively transforms all symbols associated with star wild indicators into wild symbols. The "7" symbol 73a on the first reel 34a becomes a wild symbol 77a, as illustrated in Fig. 10A. Next, the BAR symbol 73b on the second reel 34b becomes a wild symbol 77b, as illustrated in Fig. 10B. The heart symbol 73f on the second reel becomes a wild symbol 77f, as illustrated in Fig. 10C. The processor then awards the player for any winning combinations along any of the paylines for each transformation.

[0055] In another example, the processor activates the diamond wild indicators 75b and transforms all symbols associated with diamond wild indicators into wild symbols successively. As a result, the cherry symbol 73c on the second reel 34b transforms into a wild symbol 77c as illustrated in Fig. 11A. The cherry symbol 73e on the first reel 34a transforms into a wild symbol 77e as illustrated in Fig. 11B. The BAR symbol 73g on the third reel 34c then transforms into a wild symbol 77g as illustrated in Fig. 11C.

[0056] In another embodiment, the processor activates a plurality of different wild indicators during the same game. For example, the processor activates both star wild indicators 75a and diamond wild indicators 75b. The processor then transforms symbols associated with these wild indicators into wild symbols 77a, 77b, 77c, 77e, 77f and 77g, as illustrated in Fig. 12. As a result, the player receives three heart symbols along the top payline 56d. The player also receives three wild symbols along the bottom payline 56e. The player receives three wild symbols along the diagonal payline 56b extending

from the top of the first reel to the bottom of the third reel. The player also receives three heart symbols along the opposite diagonal payline 56c.

[0057] As indicated above, it should further be appreciated that the wild indicators could have multiple characteristics which are activated by the processor. For example, wild indicators could include a blue diamond, a red diamond, a blue heart and a red heart. The processor could thus activate the red wild indicators, the blue wild indicators, the diamonds, the hearts or any combination thereof.

[0058] In another embodiment of the present invention, the wild indicator is associated with one or more cards in a video poker game. The processor may determine that certain cards have a wild indicator in the form of a cherry, heart, number or other symbol suitable for use in a gaming device. The wild indicator can appear on any portion of a card or be otherwise associated with the card. In the illustrated embodiment of Fig. 13, the wild indicator appears in an upper corner of the card. The processor, prior to dealing the cards, determines which, if any, wild indicators will be associated with the cards and which, if any, of such wild indicators will be activated. The processor accordingly transforms the appropriate cards into wild cards. The association or activation may be determined randomly. As a result, the processor may include an association probability and an activation probability for each wild indicator which is utilized in a manner similar to that described above.

[0059] For example, a set of cards 80a through 80e are displayed in Fig. 13. Prior to dealing the cards, the processor determines that star wild indicators 82a will be activated. As a result, when the cards are dealt, the star wild indicator is activated and the first card 80a is transformed into a wild card 84a, as illustrated in Fig. 14. The player then obtains a winning combination.

[0060] The processor provides a signal that a card is a wild card in several ways. In one embodiment, the card displays the word "WILD." In another embodiment, the card flashes. In yet another embodiment, the speakers can emit a sound or message indicating the transformation of the card. Any other suitable indication method may be implemented in conjunction with the present invention.

[0061] In one embodiment, a plurality of cards display a wild indicator that is activated. For example, a set of cards 81a through 81e are displayed in Fig. 15. The first card 81a and third card 81c display a star wild indicator 83a. The processor determines that all star wild indicators are activated. Accordingly, the processor transforms cards 81a and 81c into wild cards 85a and 85c, respectively. The processor transforms the cards simultaneously as illustrated in Fig. 16. The player is awarded for receiving a straight.

[0062] In one embodiment, the cards are transformed into wild cards successively. The transformed card reverts to its original state when the following card transforms into a wild card, as illustrated in Figs. 17A and

17B. Thus, the processor could provide multiple awards for one set of cards.

[0063] In this embodiment, the wild indicators may also have a plurality of characteristics. The processor determines which wild indicator is activated based on a specific characteristic. For example, the first card may display a wild indicator in the form of a blue star and the third card may display a wild indicator in the form of a blue cherry. The processor, prior to dealing the cards, determines that all blue wild indicators will be activated. The processor then transforms the cards displaying the blue wild indicators into wild cards. The cards are transformed simultaneously or successively.

[0064] It should be appreciated that the wild indicators may be implemented in any other suitable primary or secondary game. It should also be appreciated that the processor may dependently or independently determine which, if any, wild indicators are associated with symbols and which, if any, wild indicators are activated. The processor may also randomly determine to simultaneously or successively change the symbols having associated activated wild indicators into wild symbols.

[0065] While the present invention is described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiments, it should be appreciated that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments, and is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the claims. Modifications and variations in the present invention may be made without departing from the novel aspects of the invention as defined in the claims, and this application is limited only by the scope of the claims.

Claims

1. A gaming device comprising:

a plurality of reels;
a plurality of symbols on said reels;
at least one wild indicator adapted to be associated with one or more of said symbols; and
a processor which communicates with said reels, determines which, if any, wild indicators are associated with the symbols, determines which, if any, of the wild indicators are activated, and transforms each symbol associated with an activated wild indicator into a wild symbol.

2. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes an association probability associated with the wild indicator, wherein the processor randomly determines which, if any, wild indicators are associated with the symbols based on said association probability.

3. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes an activation probability associated with the wild indicator, wherein the processor randomly determines which, if any, wild indicators are activated based on the activation probability.

4. The gaming device of Claim 1, which includes a plurality of types of wild indicators adapted to be associated with said plurality of symbols.

5. The gaming device of Claim 4, which includes an association probability associated with each type of wild indicator, wherein the processor determines if each type of wild indicator is associated with the plurality of symbols based on said association probability associated with said type of wild indicator.

6. The gaming device of Claim 5, wherein said association probability associated with one type of wild indicator is higher than said association probability associated with another type of wild indicator.

7. The gaming device of Claim 4, which includes an activation probability associated with each type of wild indicator, wherein the processor determines which, if any, type of wild indicator to activate based on said activation probability.

8. The gaming device of Claim 7, wherein said activation probability associated with one type of wild indicator is higher than said activation probability associated with another type of wild indicator.

9. The gaming device of Claim 4, wherein said symbols are divided into at least a first subset of symbols and a second subset of symbols, wherein the processor associates a first type of wild indicator with said first subset of symbols and associates a second type of wild indicator with said second subset of symbols.

10. The gaming device of Claim 4, wherein each type of wild indicator has a plurality of characteristics, and wherein at least one of the characteristics of a first type of wild indicator is the same as one of the characteristics of a second type of wild indicator.

11. The gaming device of Claim 10, wherein the processor determines to activate the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator based on at least one of said characteristics of the wild indicators.

12. The gaming device of Claim 10, wherein the processor is adapted to sequentially transform symbols which includes a wild indicator with two characteristics into a wild symbol if the processor selects said symbols associated with one of said characteristics

to be activated.

13. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the wild symbol substitutes for any of said symbols.
14. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the wild symbol substitutes for a limited number of said symbols.
15. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein the processor is adapted to make multiple determinations of which, if any, of the wild indicators are activated and to transform each symbol associated with an activated wild indicator into a wild symbol.
16. The gaming device of Claim 15, wherein the processor simultaneously transforms each symbol associated with an activated wild indicator into a wild symbol.
17. The gaming device of Claim 15, wherein the processor successively transforms each symbol associated with an activated wild indicator into a wild symbol.
18. A method for providing a wild symbol in a gaming device, the method comprising the steps of:
 - (a) displaying a plurality of reels;
 - (b) displaying a plurality of symbols on said reels;
 - (c) activating said reels;
 - (d) associating a wild indicator with one or more of said plurality of symbols if a processor determines that said wild indicator is associated with one or more of said plurality of symbols;
 - (e) activating said wild indicator if said processor determines that said wild indicator is activated;
 - (f) transforming said symbols having an activated wild indicator; and
 - (g) awarding a player when said symbols transform into wild symbols if said processor determines that a player has achieved a winning outcome.
19. The method of Claim 18, which includes the step of associating a first type of wild indicator with said symbols if the processor determines that said first type of wild indicator is associated with said symbols.
20. The method of Claim 19, which includes the step of transforming the symbols associated with the first type of wild indicator into wild symbols if the processor determines that said first type of wild indicator is activated.
21. The method of Claim 20, wherein the symbols are transformed into wild symbols successively.
22. The method of Claim 20, wherein the symbols are transformed into wild symbols simultaneously.
23. The method of Claim 19, which includes the step of associating a second type of wild indicator with said symbols if the processor determines that said second type of wild indicator is associated with said symbols.
24. The method of Claim 23, which includes the step of transforming the symbols associated with the second type of wild indicator into wild symbols if the processor determines that the second type of wild indicator is activated.
25. The method of Claim 24, wherein the symbols are transformed into wild symbols successively.
26. The method of Claim 24, wherein the symbols are transformed into wild symbols simultaneously.
27. The method of Claim 23, which includes the step of determining whether to activate the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator based on at least one characteristic of the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator.
28. A gaming device comprising:
 - a plurality of reels;
 - a plurality of symbols on said reels;
 - at least one type of wild indicator associated with one or more of said plurality of symbols; and
 - a processor which communicates with said reels, determines if the type of wild indicator is activated, and transforms each symbol associated with an activated wild indicator into a wild symbol.
29. The gaming device of Claim 28, which includes a first type of wild indicator associated with a plurality of said symbols.
30. The gaming device of Claim 28, which includes a first type of wild indicator associated with one of said symbols and a second type of wild indicator associated with another of said symbols.
31. The gaming device of Claim 30, which includes an activation probability associated with each type of wild indicator, wherein the processor determines if each type of wild indicator is activated based on the activation probability.

32. The gaming device of Claim 30, wherein the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator each have a plurality of characteristics, wherein at least one of the characteristics of the first type of wild indicator is the same as one of the characteristics of the second type of wild indicator.
33. The gaming device of Claim 28, which includes a plurality of a first type of wild indicator associated with a first plurality of symbols and a plurality of a second type of wild indicator associated with a second plurality of symbols.
34. The gaming device of Claim 33, wherein the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator each have a plurality of characteristics, at least one characteristic of the first type of wild indicator being the same as one characteristic of the second type of wild indicator.
35. The gaming device of Claim 34, wherein the processor determines to activate the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator based on said characteristic of the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator.
36. A method for providing a gaming device having at least one wild symbol, the method comprising the steps of:
- (a) displaying a plurality of reels;
 - (b) providing a plurality of symbols on the plurality of reels which includes at least one of a first type of wild indicator associated with at least one of the symbols on the plurality of reels;
 - (c) activating the plurality of reels;
 - (d) transforming the symbols associated with the first type of wild indicator into wild symbols if a processor determines that the first type of wild indicator is activated; and
 - (e) providing an award to a player if the processor determines that the player has achieved a winning outcome.
37. The method of Claim 36, which includes the step of providing a plurality of the first type of wild indicators associated with said symbols.
38. The method of Claim 36, which includes the step of providing a second type of wild indicator associated with said symbols.
39. The method of Claim 38, which includes the step of transforming the symbols associated with the activated second type of wild indicators into wild symbols if the processor determines that the second type of wild activator is activated.
40. The method of Claim 39, wherein the symbols are transformed into wild symbols successively.
41. The method of Claim 39, wherein the symbols are transformed into wild symbols simultaneously.
42. The method of Claim 39, wherein the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator each include a plurality of characteristics.
43. The method of Claim 42, wherein the processor activates the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator based on one of the characteristics of the first type of wild indicator that is the same as one of the characteristics of the second type of wild indicator.
44. A gaming device comprising:
- a display device;
 - a plurality of cards displayed by said display device; and
 - at least one wild indicator adapted to be associated with one or more of said cards; and
 - a processor for determining which, if any, wild indicators are associated with one or more of the cards, for determining which, if any, wild indicators are activated, and for transforming each card associated with an activated wild indicator into a wild card.
45. The gaming device of Claim 44, which includes an association probability associated with each of the wild indicators, wherein the processor randomly determines which, if any, wild indicators are associated with the cards based on said association probability.
46. The gaming device of Claim 45, including a plurality of wild indicators, wherein the association probability associated with a first wild indicator is higher than the association probability associated with a second wild indicator.
47. The gaming device of Claim 44, which includes an activation probability associated with each of the wild indicators, wherein the processor randomly determines which, if any, wild indicators to activate based on said activation probability.
48. The gaming device of Claim 44, which includes a plurality of types of wild indicators adapted to be associated with said plurality of cards.
49. The gaming device of Claim 48, wherein each type of wild indicator has a plurality of characteristics, and wherein at least one of the characteristics of a first type of wild indicator is the same as one of the

characteristics of a second type of wild indicator.

50. The gaming device of Claim 49, wherein the processor determines to activate the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator based on at least one of said characteristics of the wild indicators.

51. A method for providing a wild card in a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) displaying a plurality of cards;
- (b) associating a wild indicator with one or more cards if a processor determines that any wild indicators are associated with said cards;
- (c) activating said cards if the processor determines that the wild indicators are activated;
- (d) transforming said cards associated with said wild indicators into wild cards; and
- (e) awarding a player if the processor determines that the player has achieved a winning outcome.

52. The method of Claim 51, which includes the step of associating a plurality of wild indicators with said plurality of cards including a first type of wild indicator associated with a first plurality of cards and a second type of wild indicator associated with a second plurality of cards if the processor determines that said first type of wild indicator is associated with said first plurality of cards and that said second type of wild indicator is associated with said second plurality of cards.

53. The method of Claim 52, wherein the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator each include a plurality of wild characteristics.

54. The method of Claim 53, which includes the step of determining whether to activate the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator based on at least one characteristic of the first type of wild indicator and the second type of wild indicator.

55. A gaming device comprising:

- a display device;
- a first card adapted to be displayed by said display device; and
- a first wild indicator associated with said first card; and
- a processor for transforming said first card into a wild card if said processor activates said first wild indicator.

56. The gaming device of Claim 55, which includes a second wild indicator associated with a second card

adapted to be displayed by said display device.

57. The gaming device of Claim 56, which includes an activation probability associated with said first wild indicator and said second wild indicator, wherein the processor randomly determines which, if any, wild indicators are activated based on the activation probability.

58. The gaming device of Claim 56, wherein the first wild activator and the second wild activator are the same type of wild indicator.

59. The gaming device of Claim 56, wherein the first wild indicator and the second wild indicator are different types of wild indicators.

60. The gaming device of Claim 56, wherein the first wild indicator and the second wild indicator each have a plurality of characteristics, at least one of the characteristics of the first wild indicator being the same as one of the characteristics of the second wild indicator, wherein the processor determines to activate the first wild activator and the second wild activator based on said characteristics.

61. The gaming device of Claim 55, which includes a plurality of wild indicators associated with said first card.

62. A method for providing a gaming device having a plurality of wild indicators, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) displaying a plurality of reels;
- (b) displaying a plurality of symbols on the plurality of reels;
- (c) activating said plurality of reels;
- (d) associating a plurality of wild indicators with a plurality of symbols if a processor determines that the plurality of wild indicators are associated with the plurality of symbols;
- (e) activating the wild indicators if the processor determines that the wild indicators are activated;
- (f) transforming the symbols associated with the activated wild indicators into wild symbols; and
- (g) awarding a player if the processor determines that the player has achieved a winning outcome.

63. A method for providing a gaming device having a plurality of wild indicators, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) displaying a plurality of reels;
- (b) providing a plurality of symbols on the plu-

rality of reels which includes a plurality of wild indicators associated with said plurality of symbols;

(c) activating said plurality of reels;

(d) activating said plurality of wild indicators if the processor determines that the plurality of wild indicators are activated; 5

(e) transforming the plurality of symbols associated with the activated wild indicators into wild symbols; and 10

(f) awarding a player if the processor determines that the player has achieved a winning outcome.

64. A method for providing a gaming device having a plurality of wild indicators, the method comprising the steps of: 15

(a) displaying a plurality of cards;

(b) associating a plurality of wild indicators with a plurality of said cards if a processor determines that the plurality of wild indicators are associated with the plurality of said cards; 20

activating the plurality of wild indicators if the processor determines that the wild indicators are activated; 25

(c) transforming the cards associated with the activated wild indicators into wild cards; and

(d) awarding a player if the processor determines that the player has achieved a winning outcome. 30

65. A method for providing a gaming device having a plurality of wild indicators, the method comprising the steps of: 35

(a) displaying a plurality of cards which include a plurality of wild indicators associated with said plurality of cards;

(b) activating said plurality of wild indicators if the processor determines that the plurality of wild indicators will be activated; 40

(c) transforming the plurality of cards associated with the activated wild indicators into wild cards; and 45

(d) awarding a player if the processor determines that the player has achieved a winning outcome. 50

FIG.1A

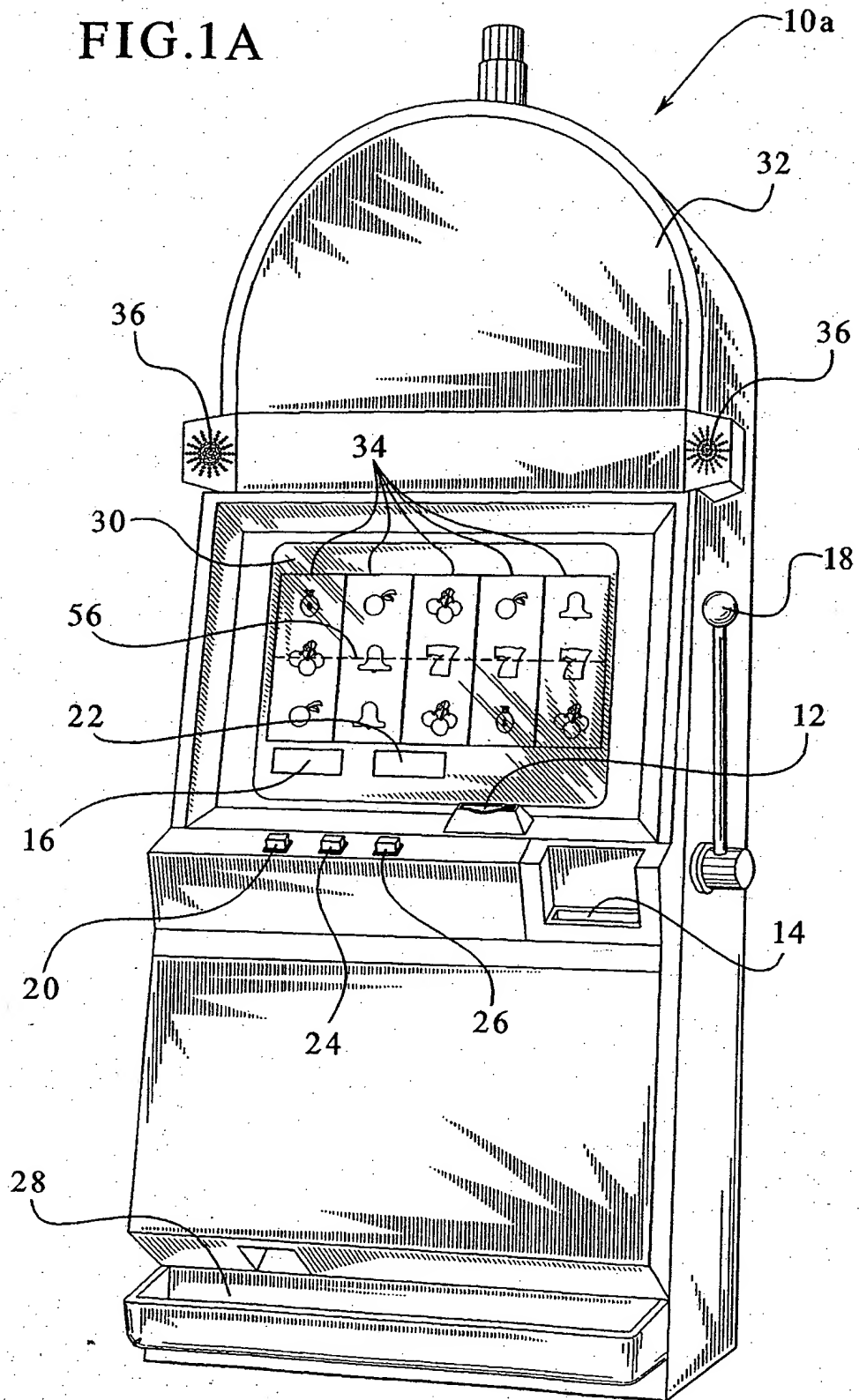


FIG.1B

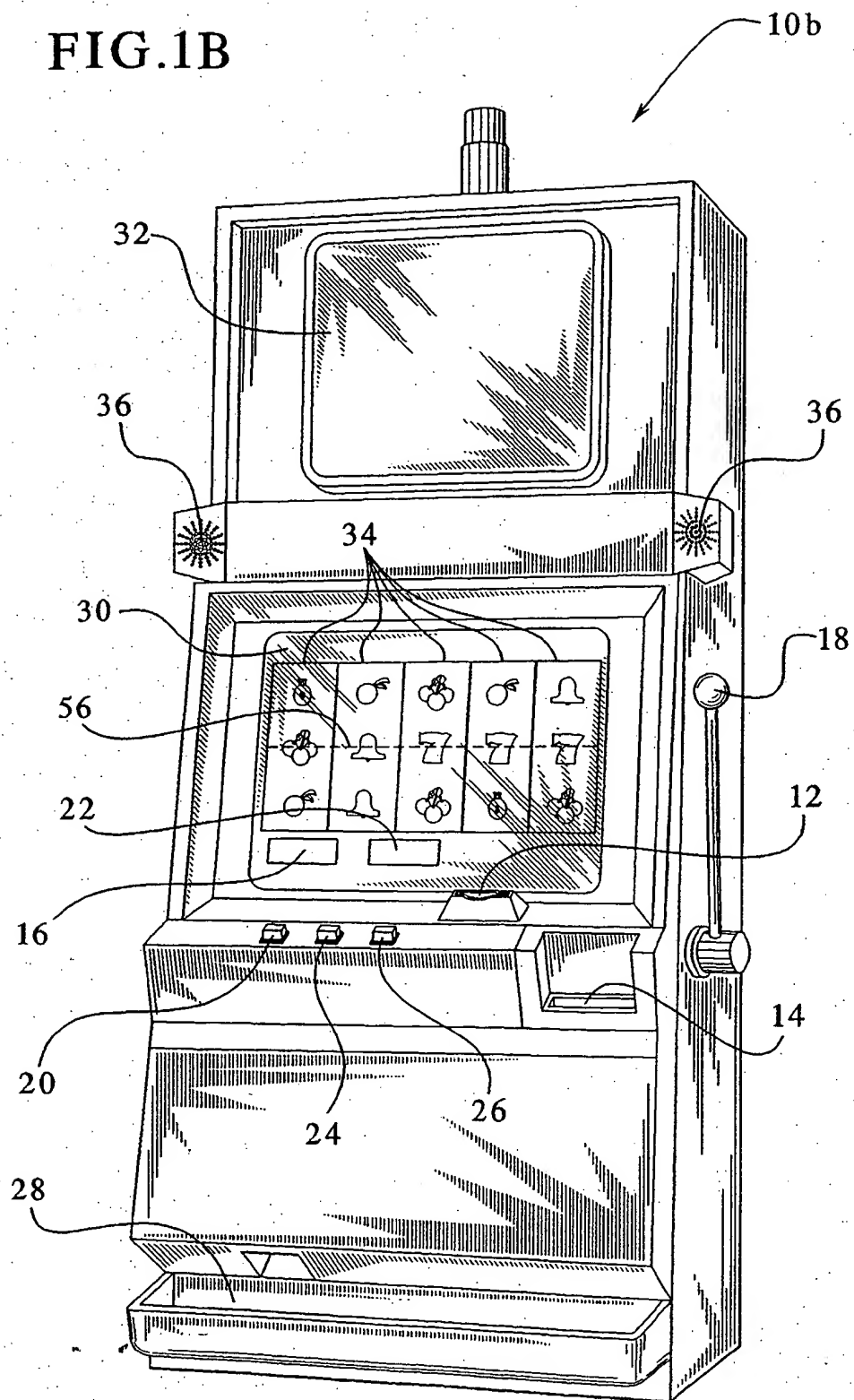


FIG. 2

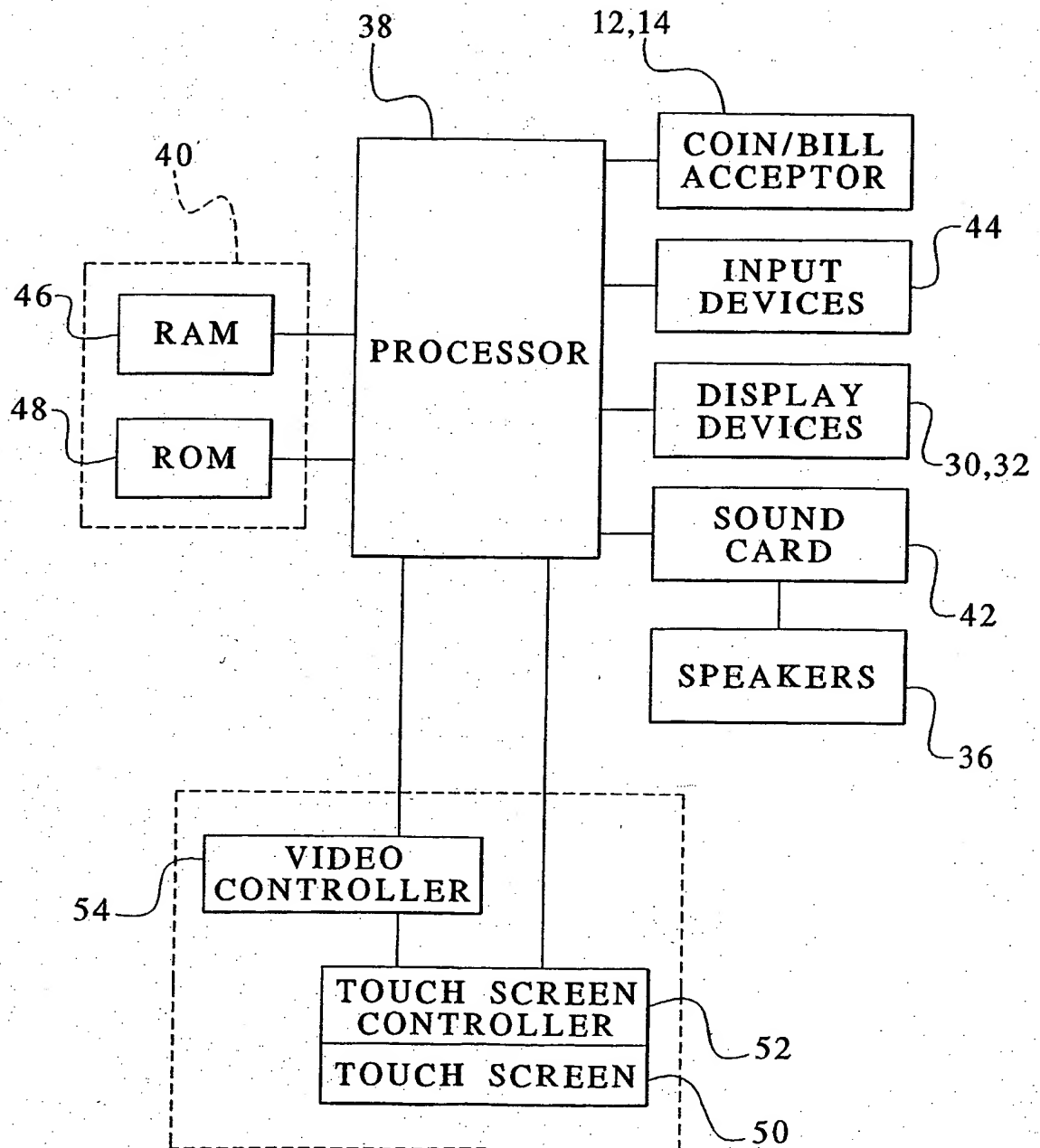


FIG. 3

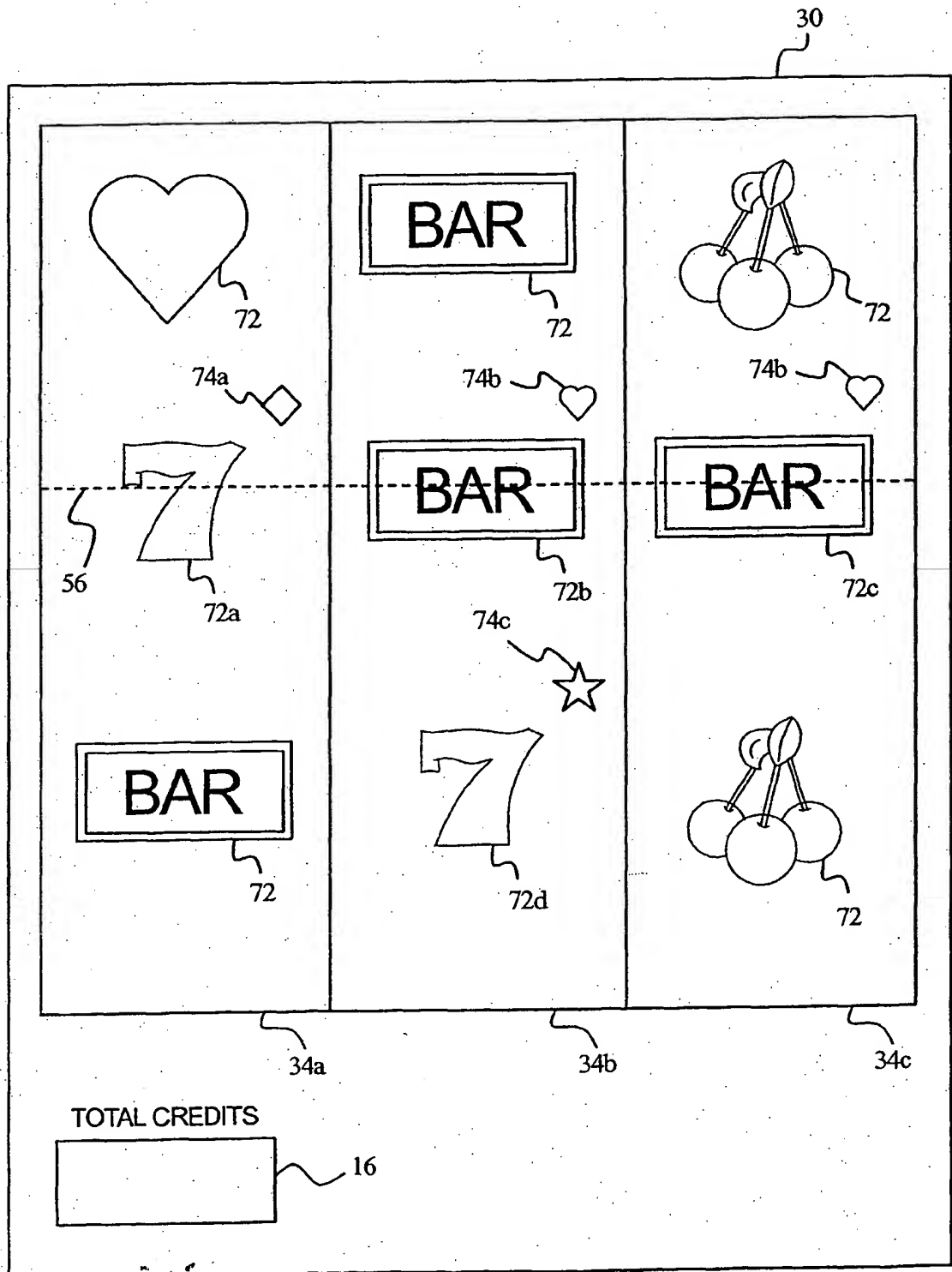


FIG. 4

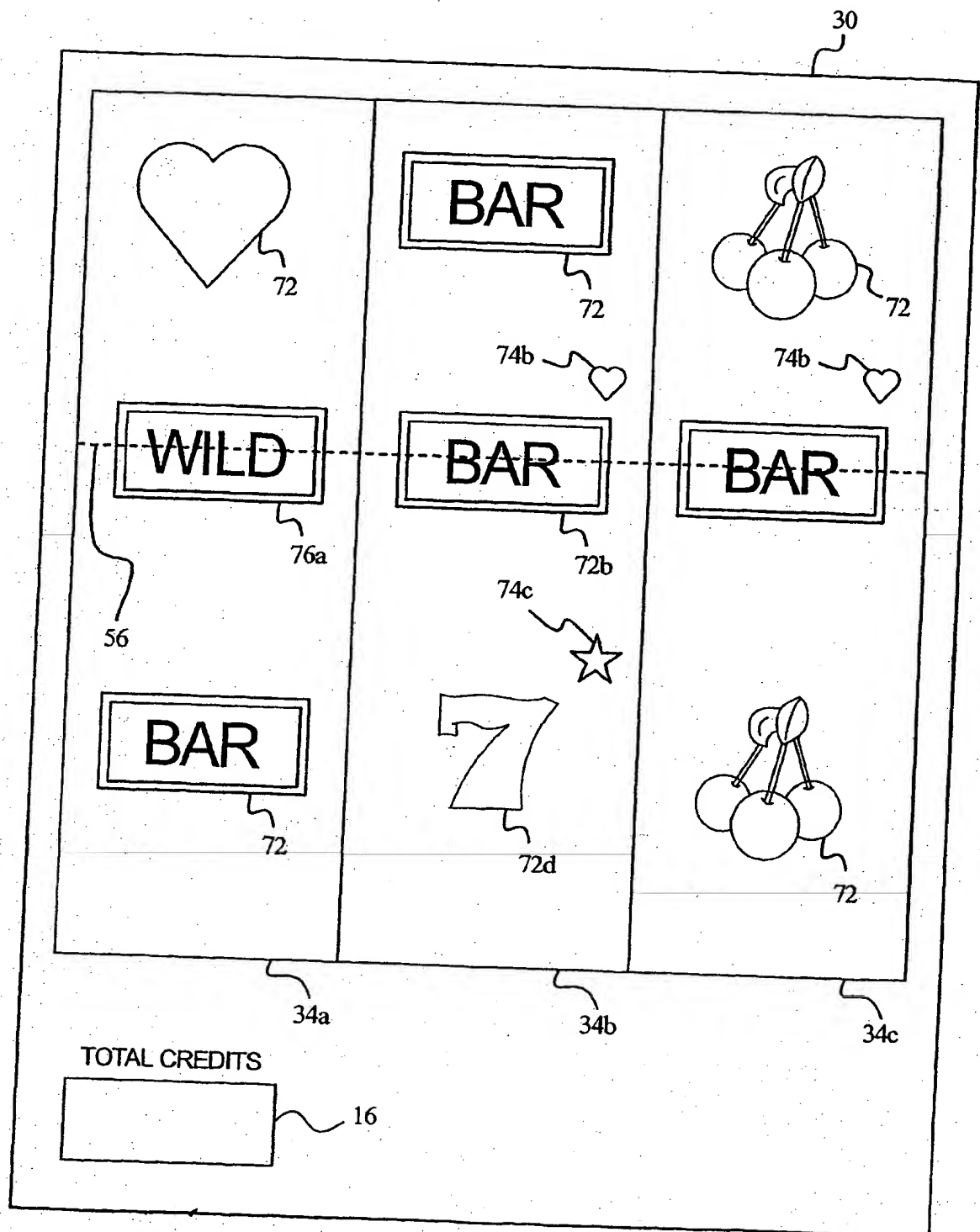


FIG. 5

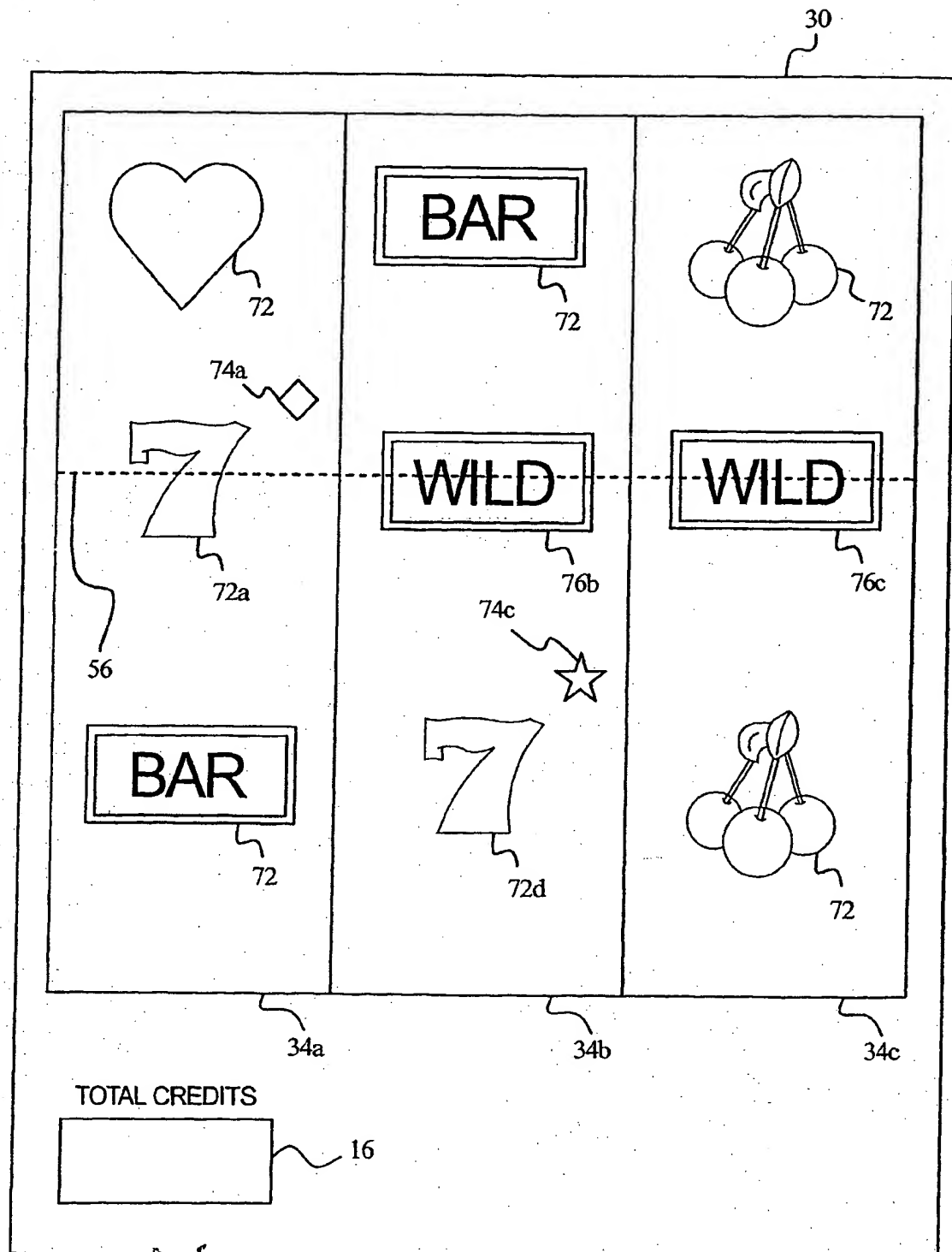


FIG. 6A

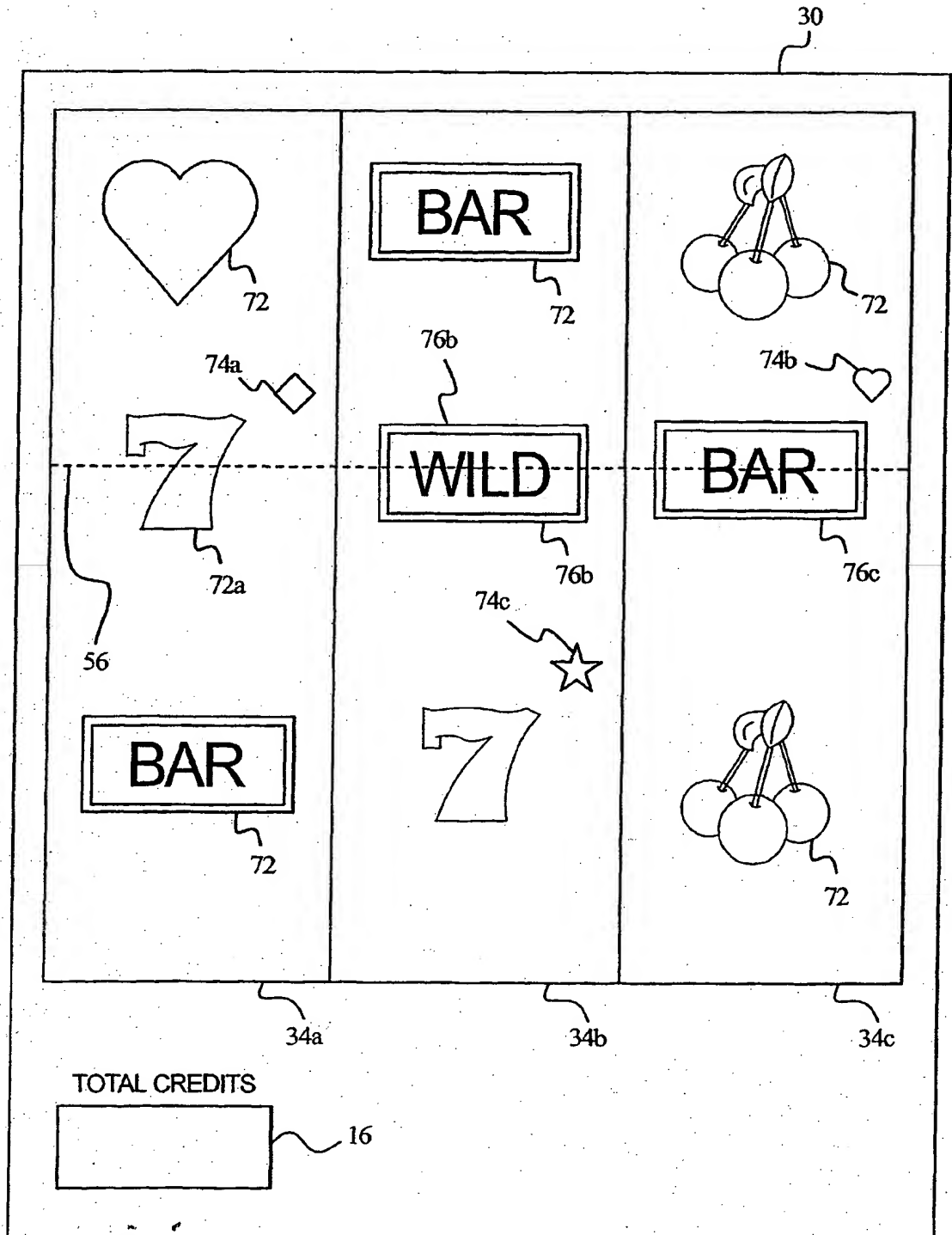


FIG. 6B

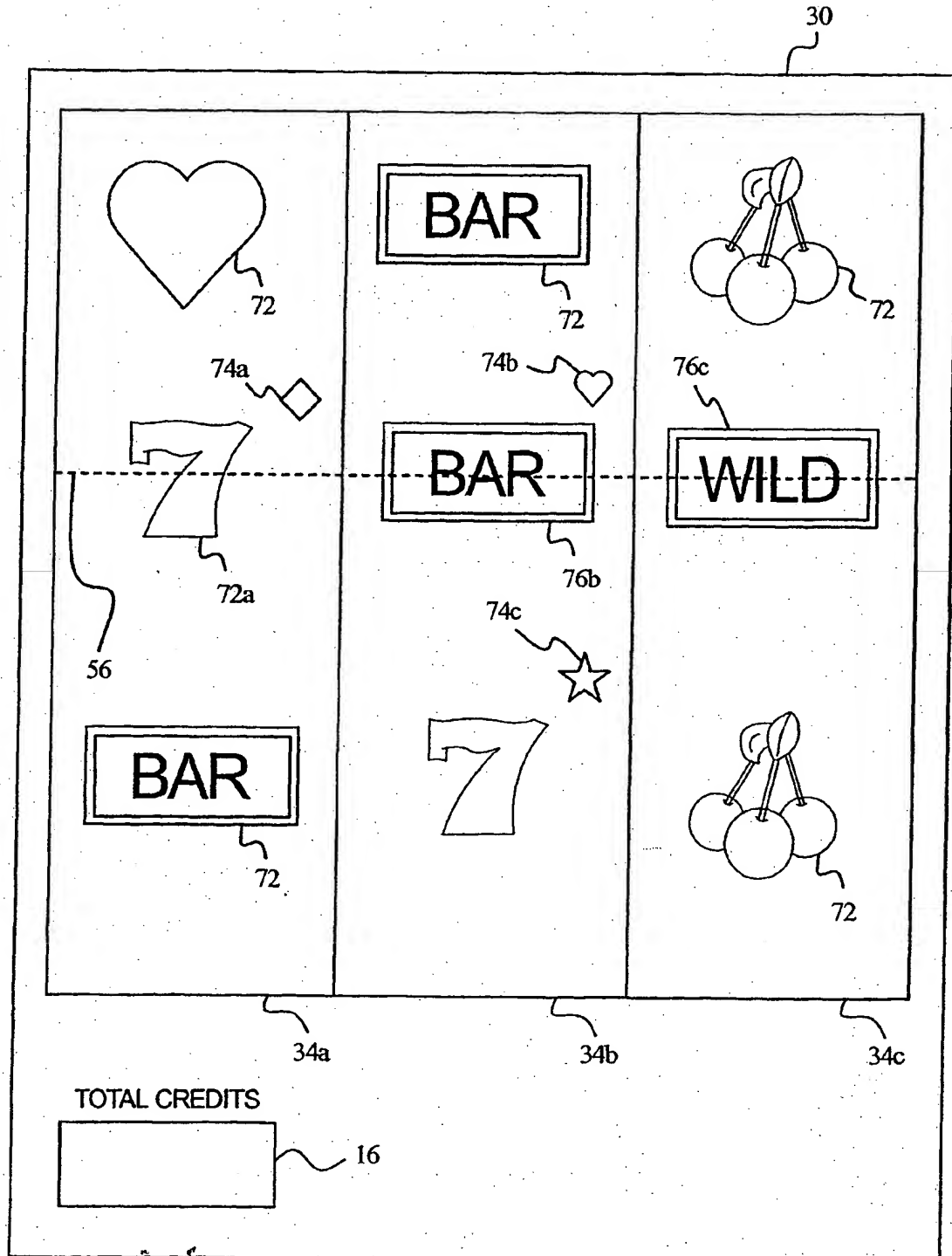


FIG. 7

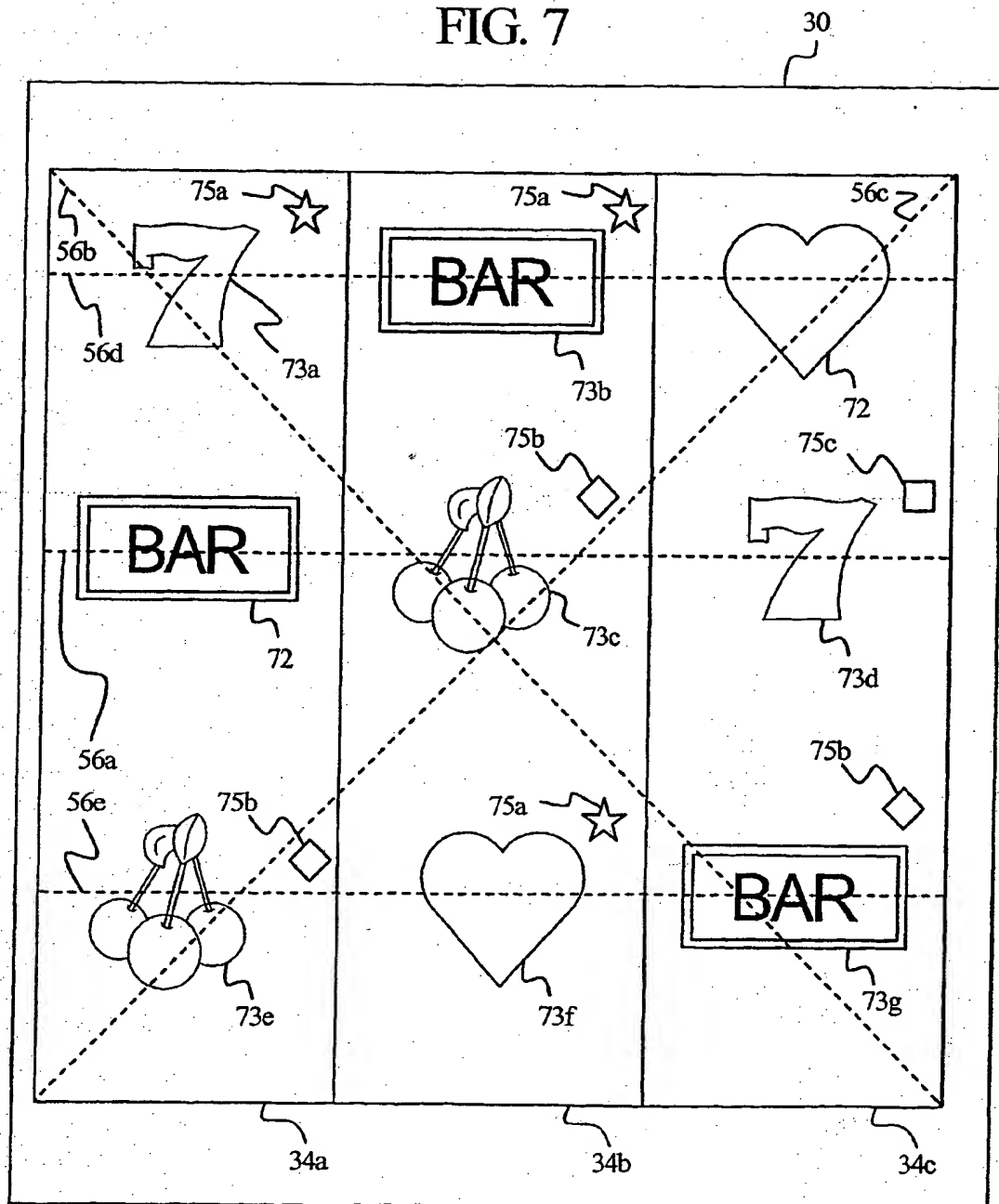


FIG. 8

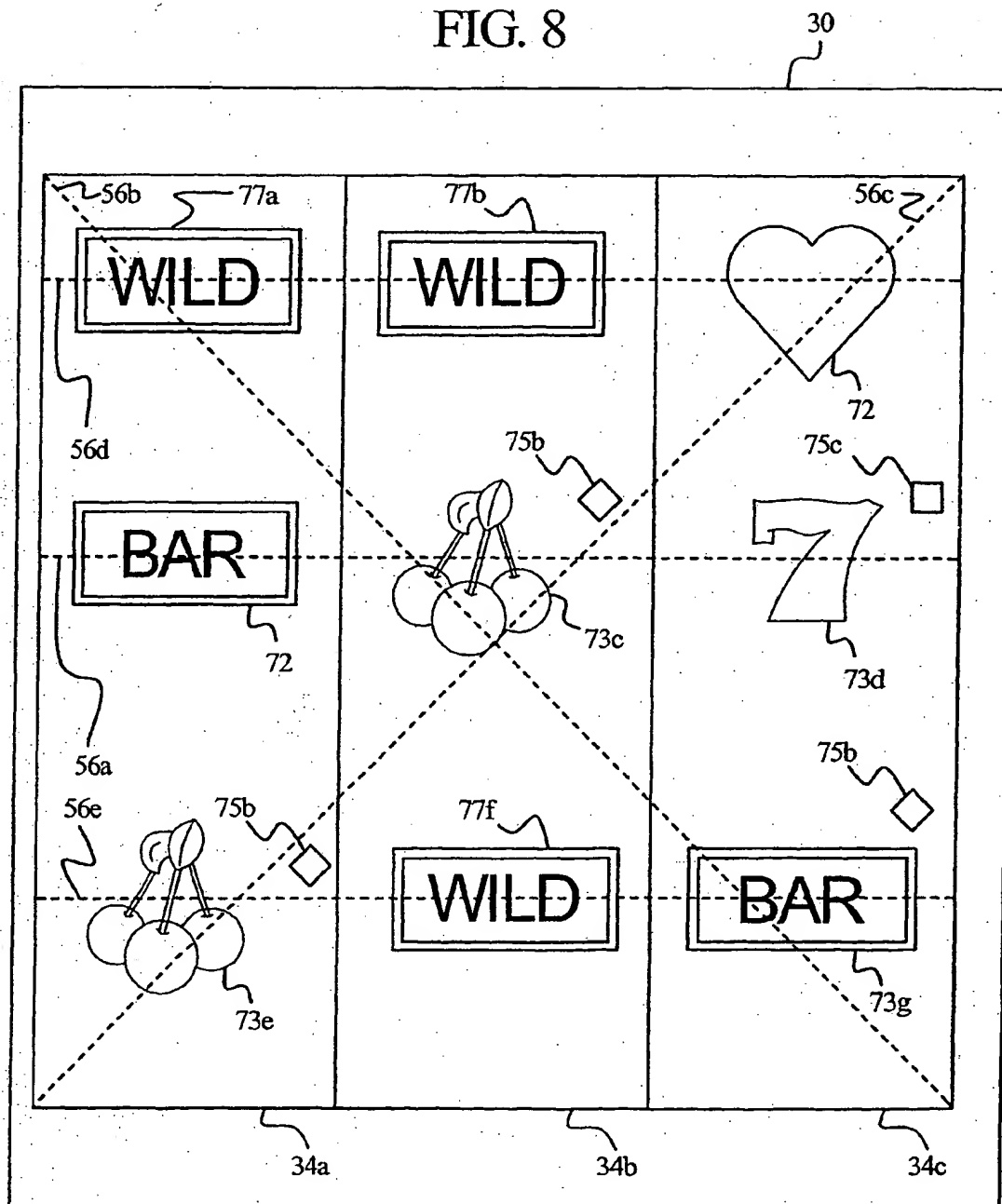


FIG. 9

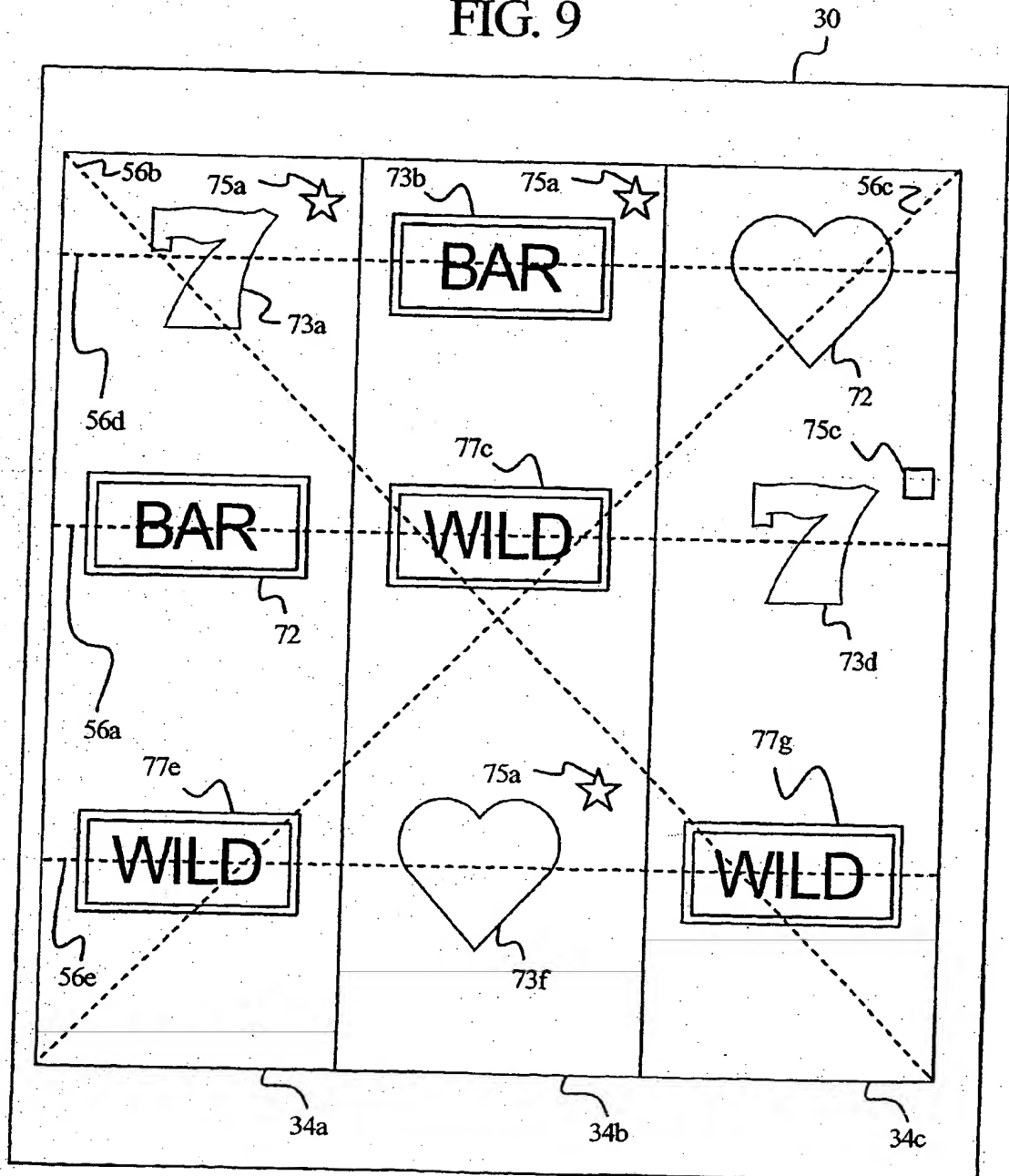


FIG. 10A

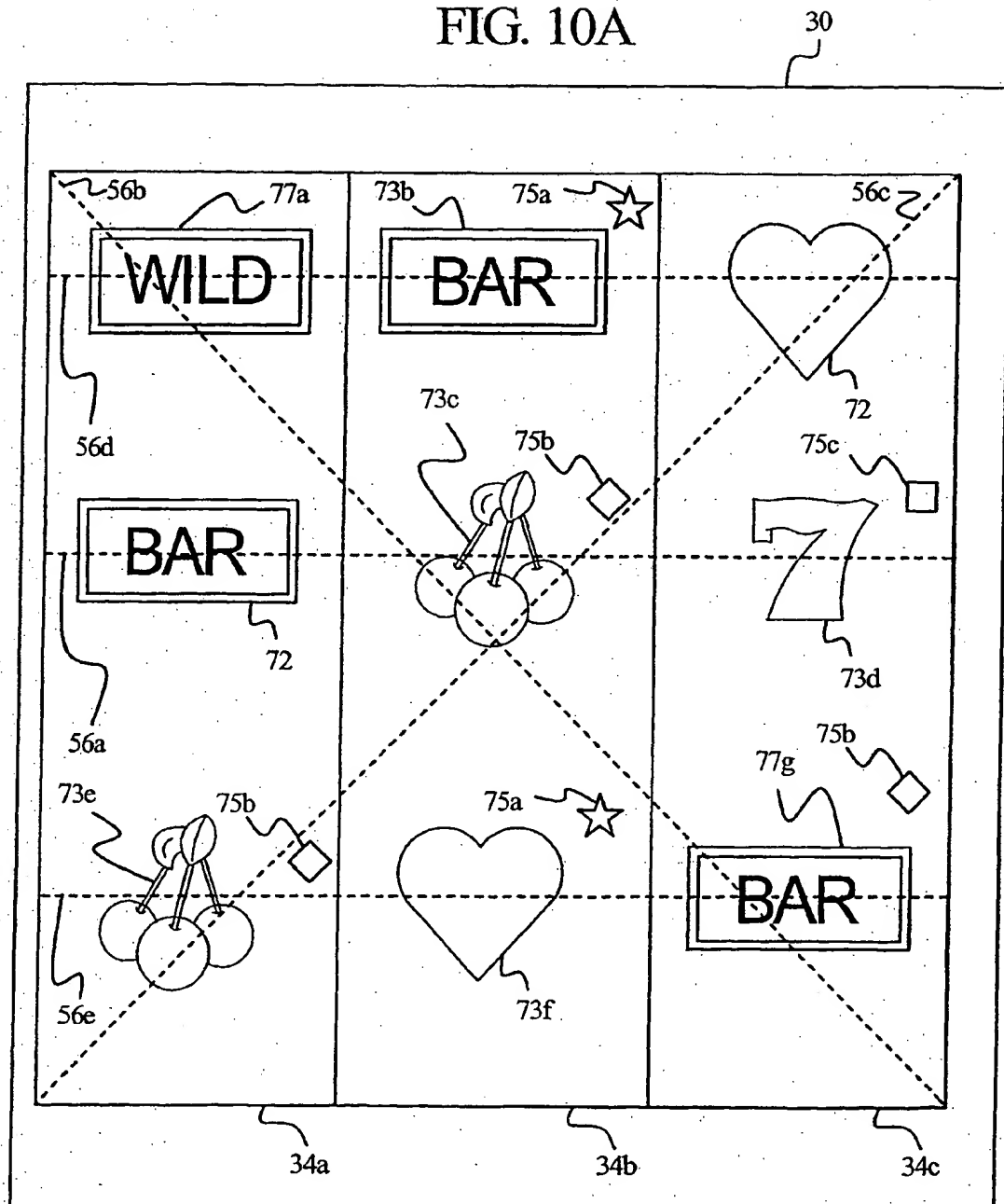


FIG. 10B

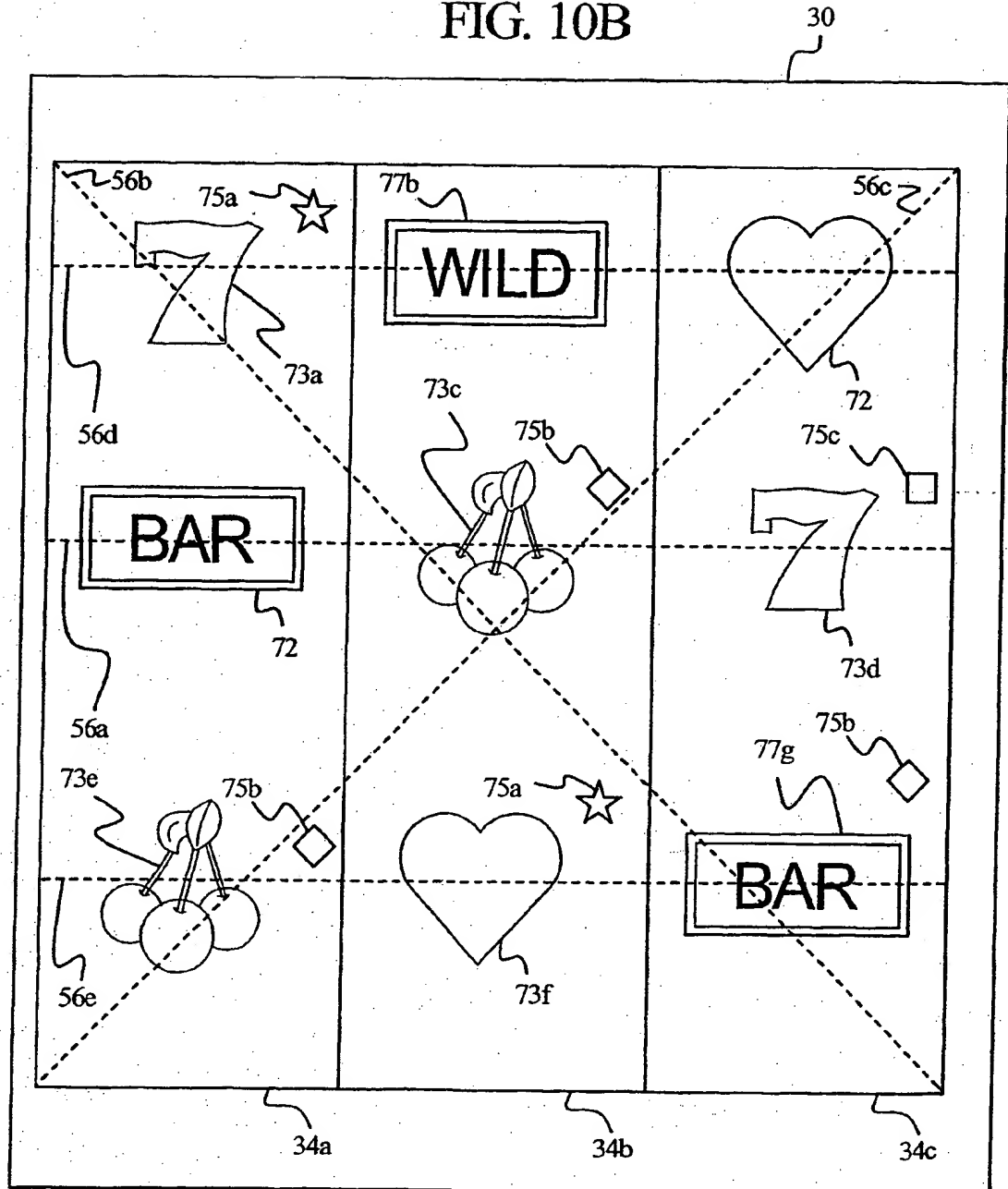


FIG. 10C

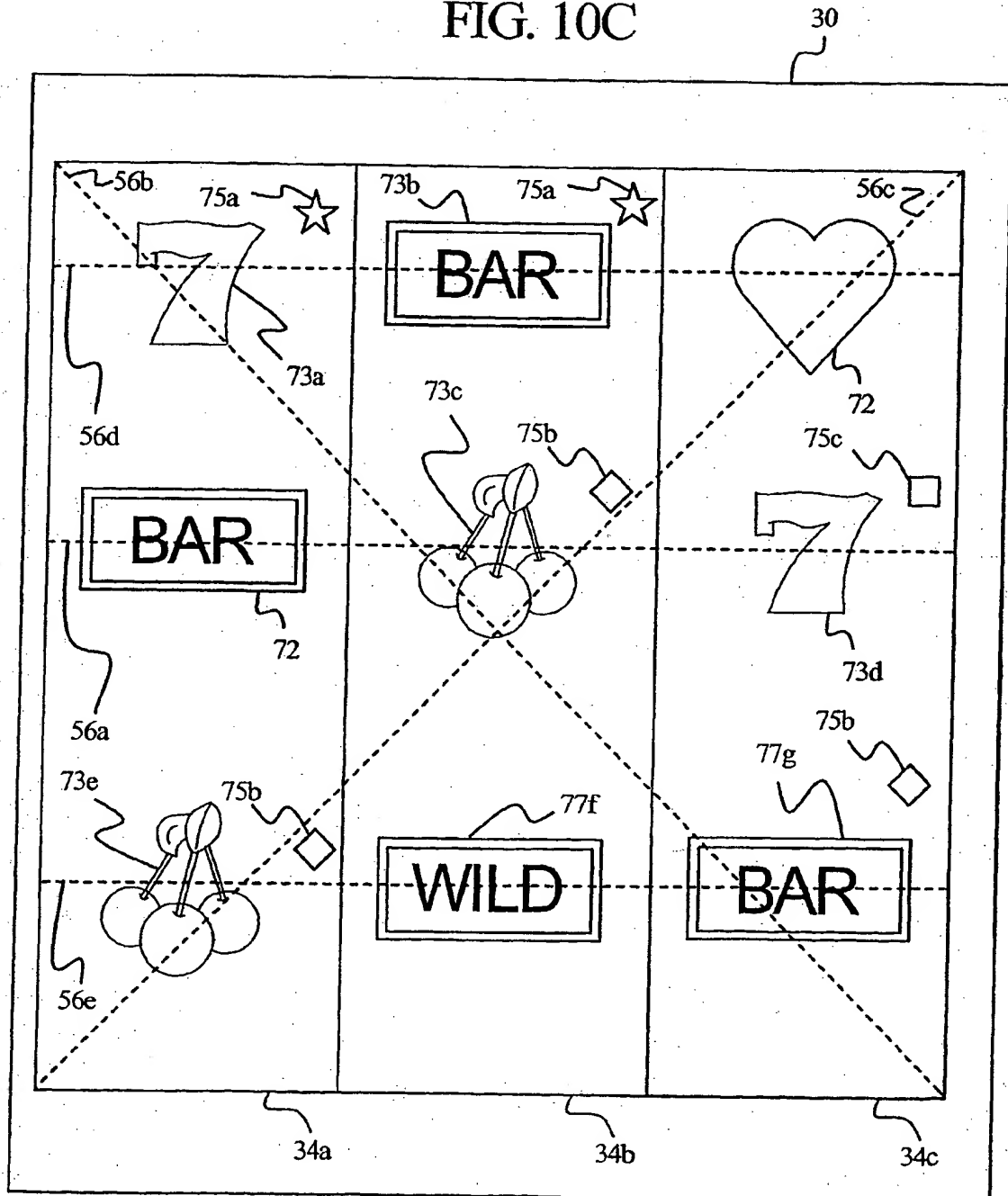


FIG. 11A

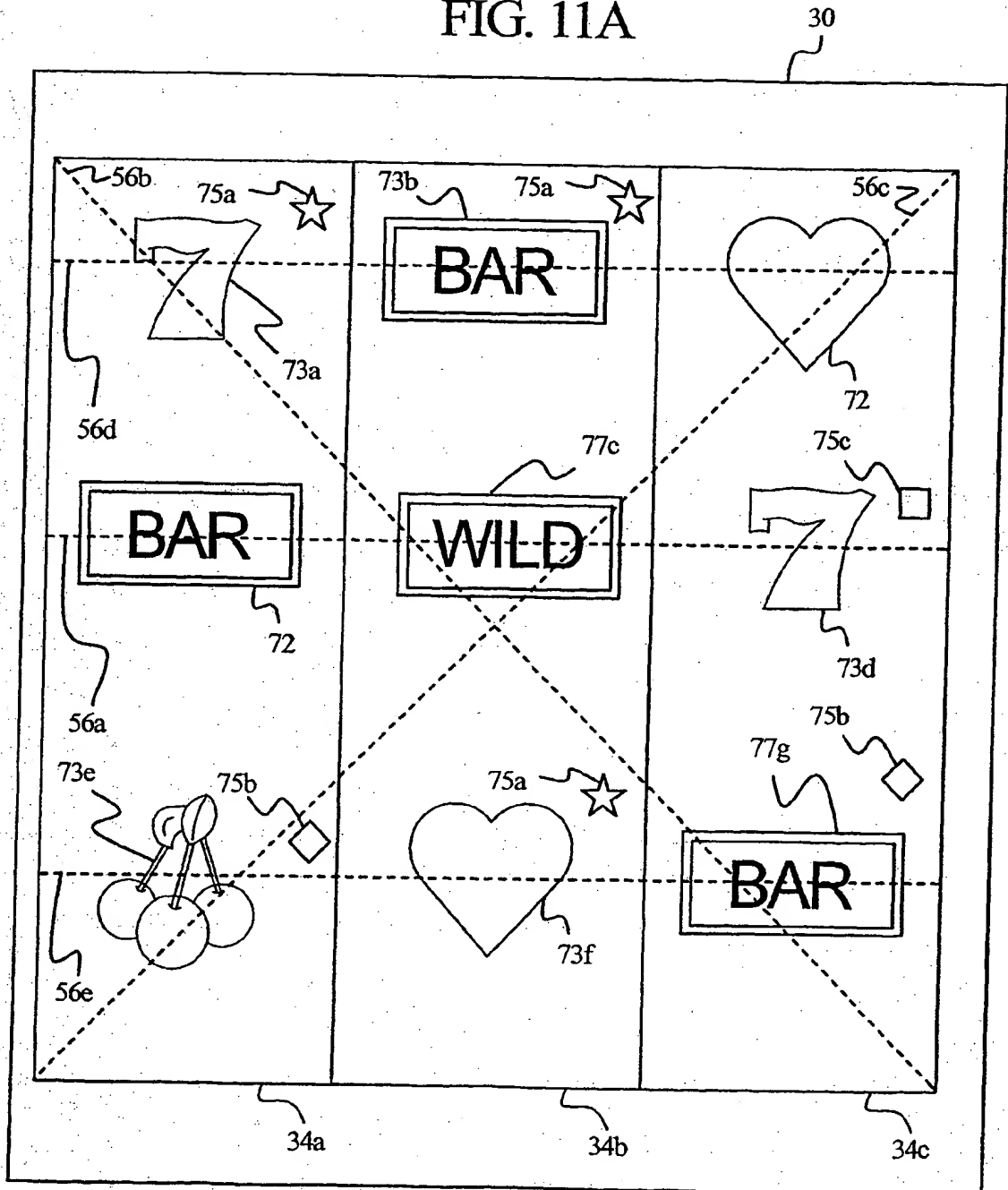


FIG. 11B

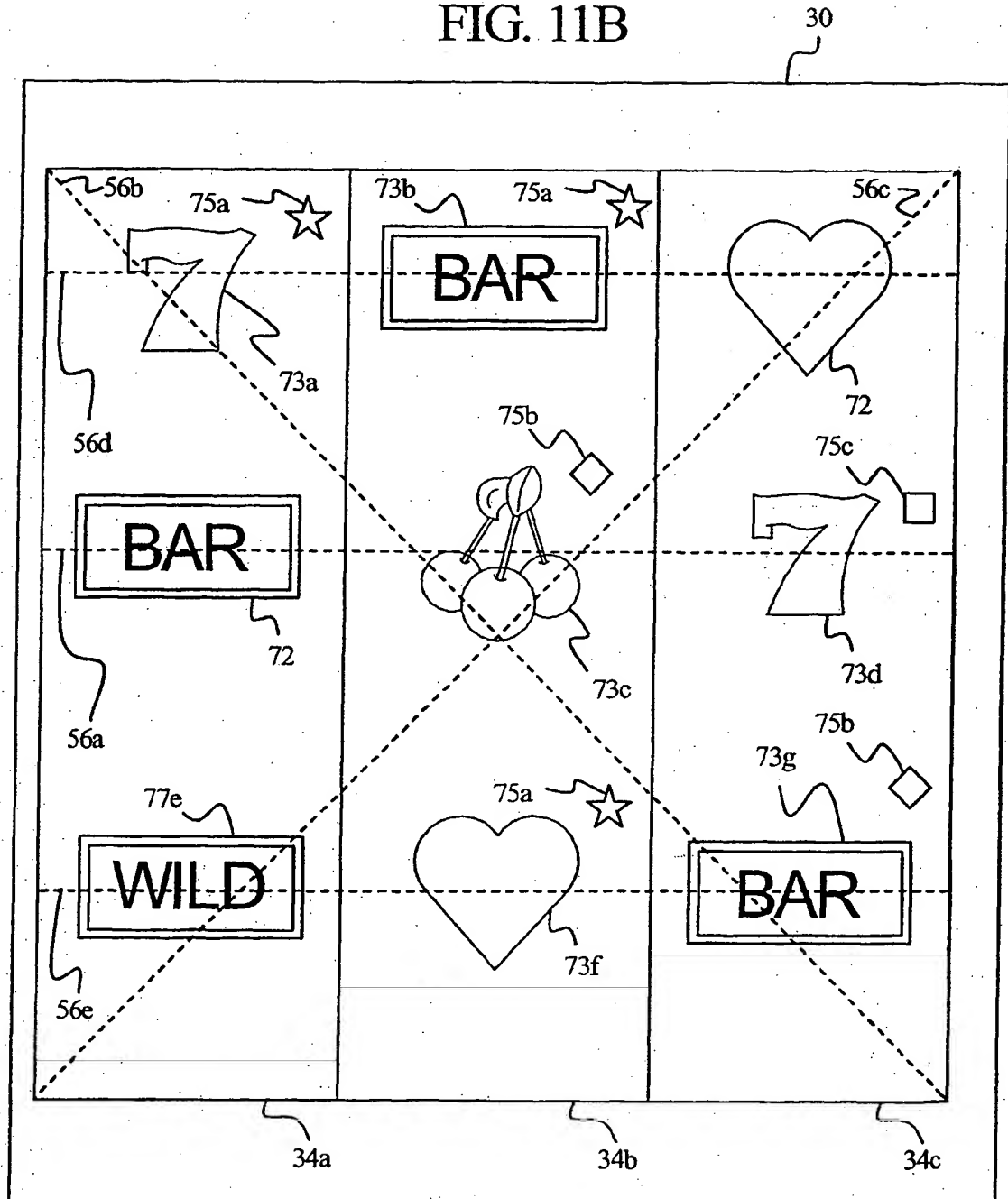


FIG. 11C

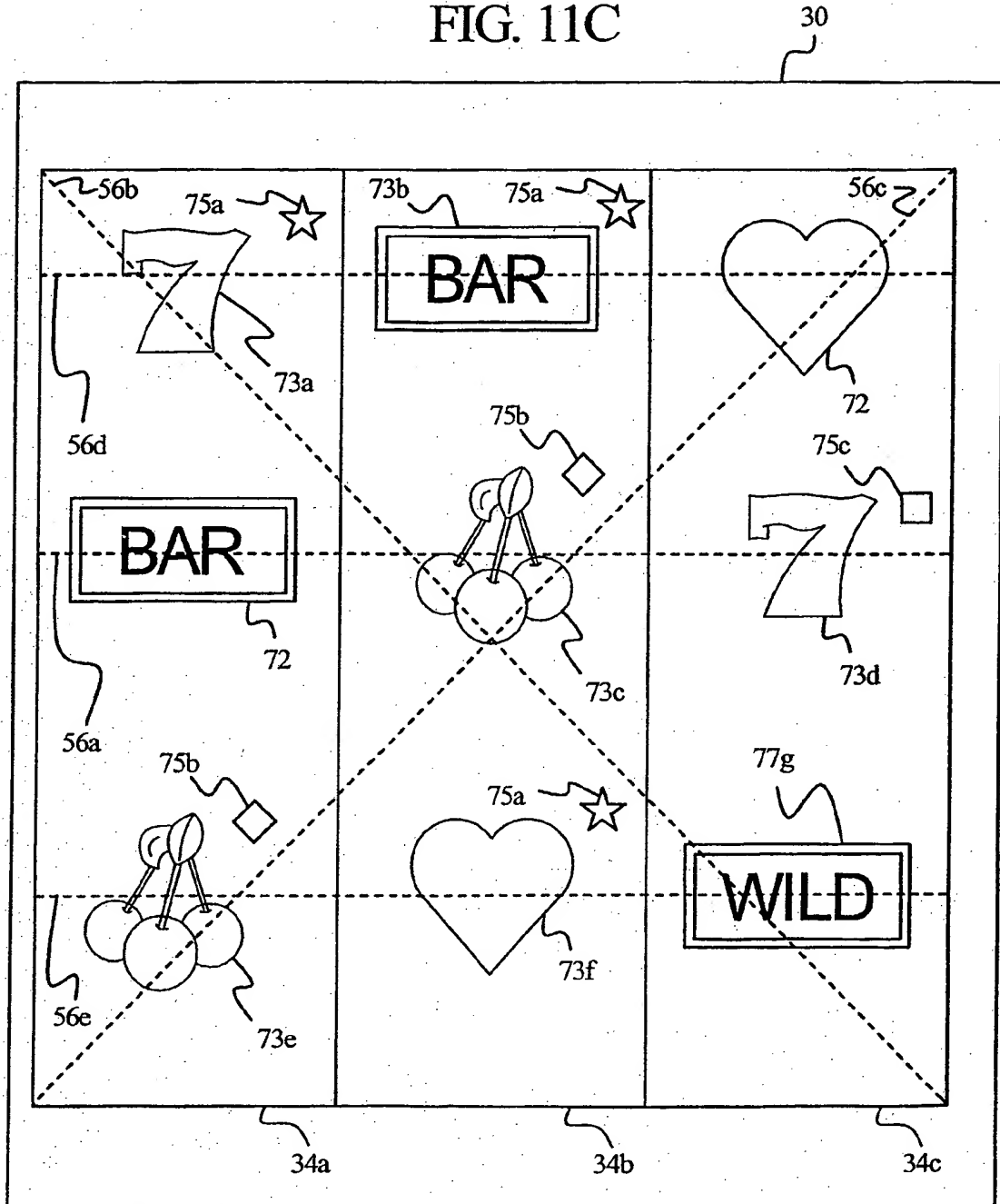


FIG. 12

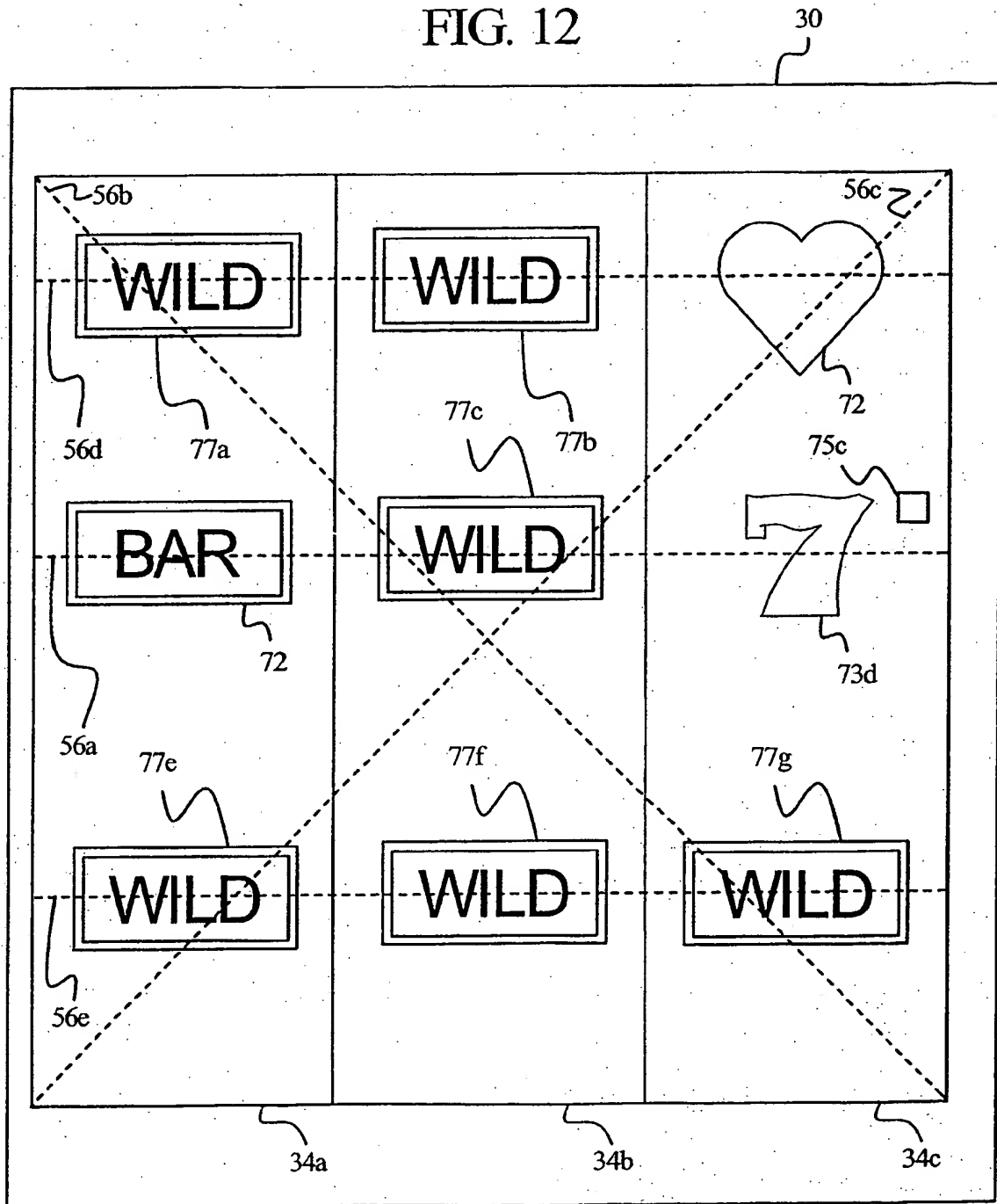


FIG. 13

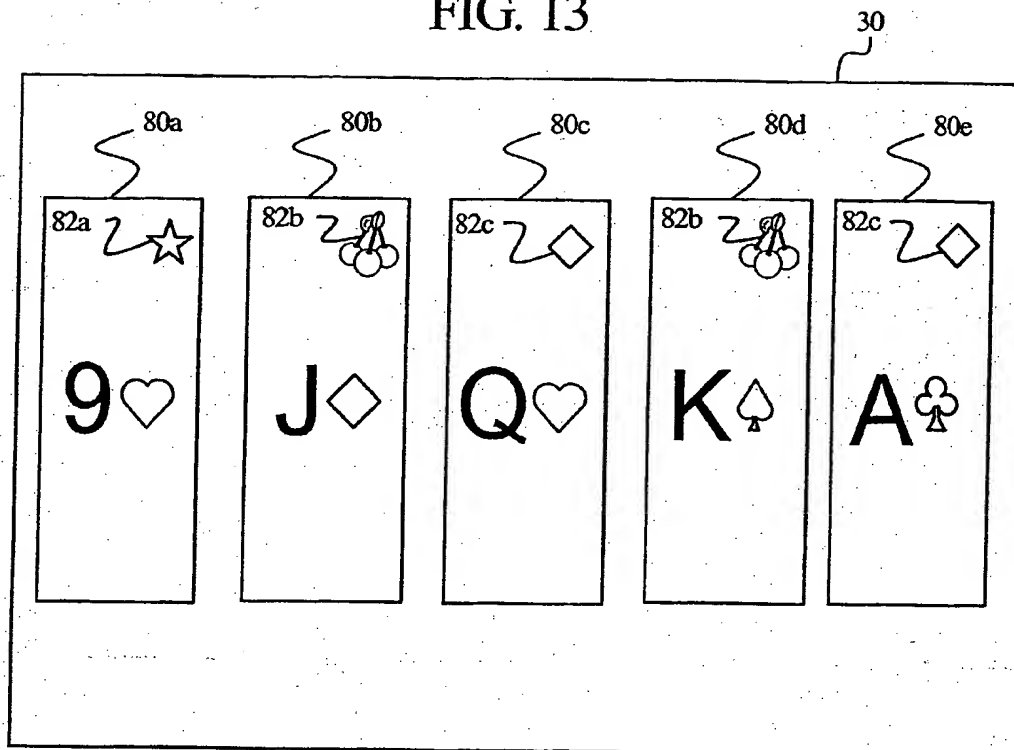


FIG. 14

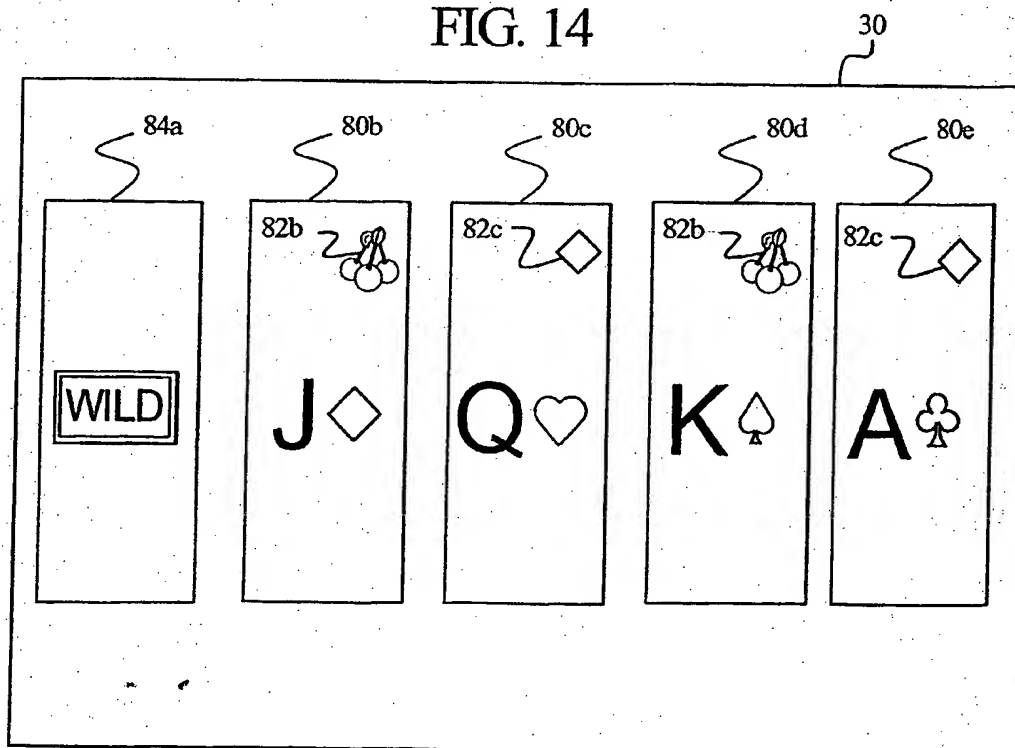


FIG. 15

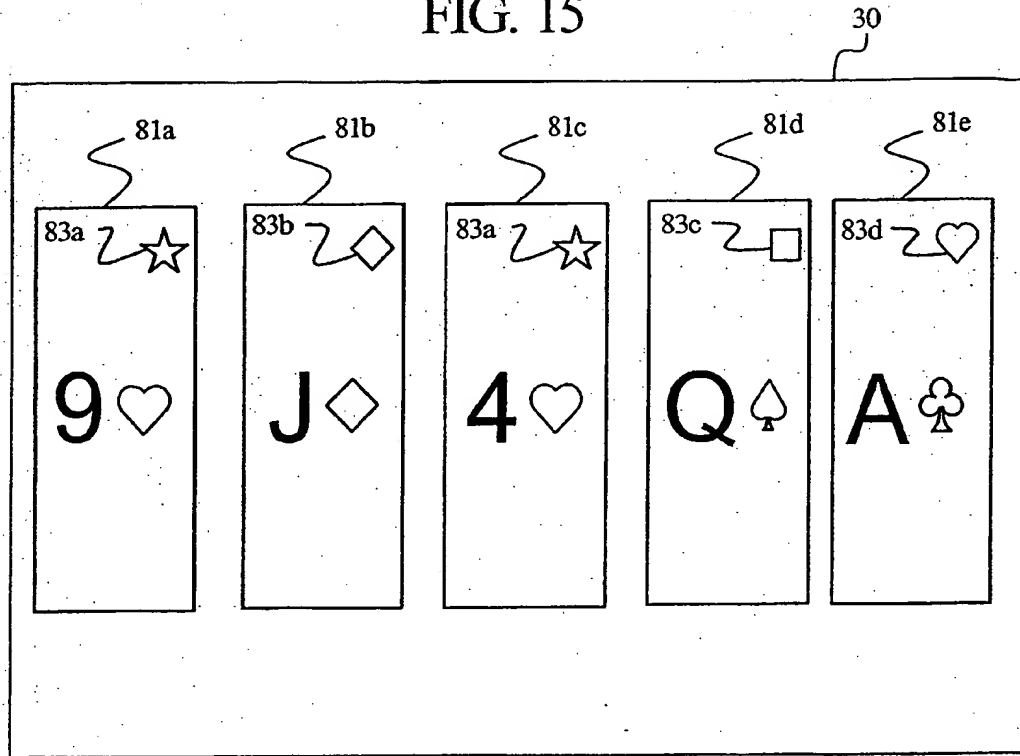


FIG. 16

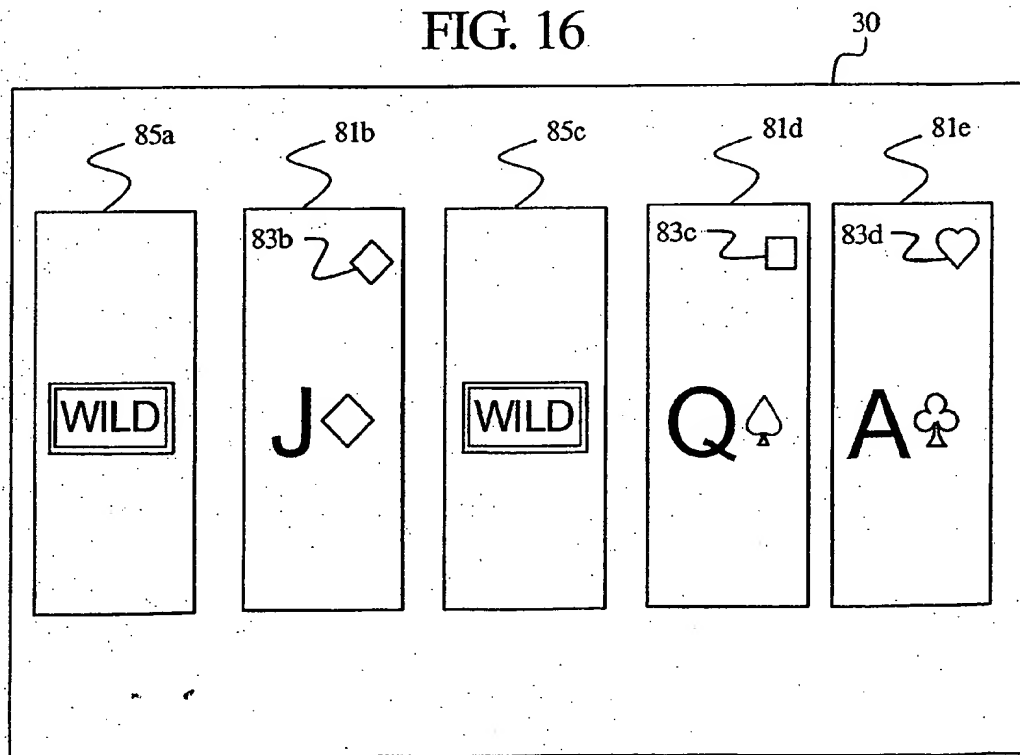


FIG. 17A

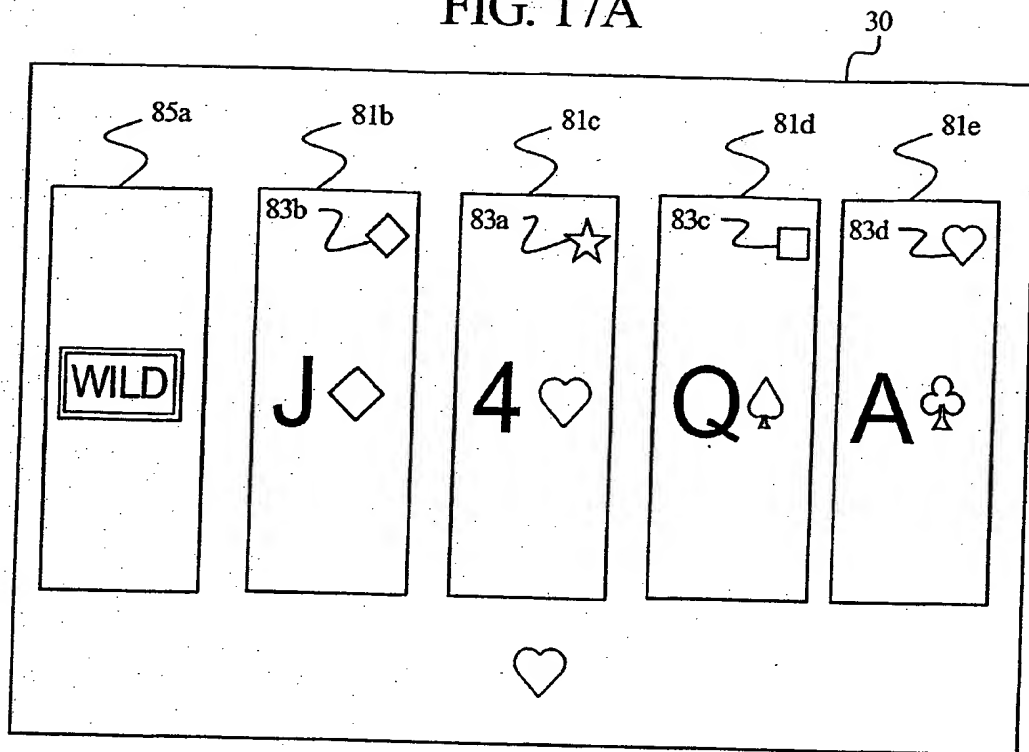
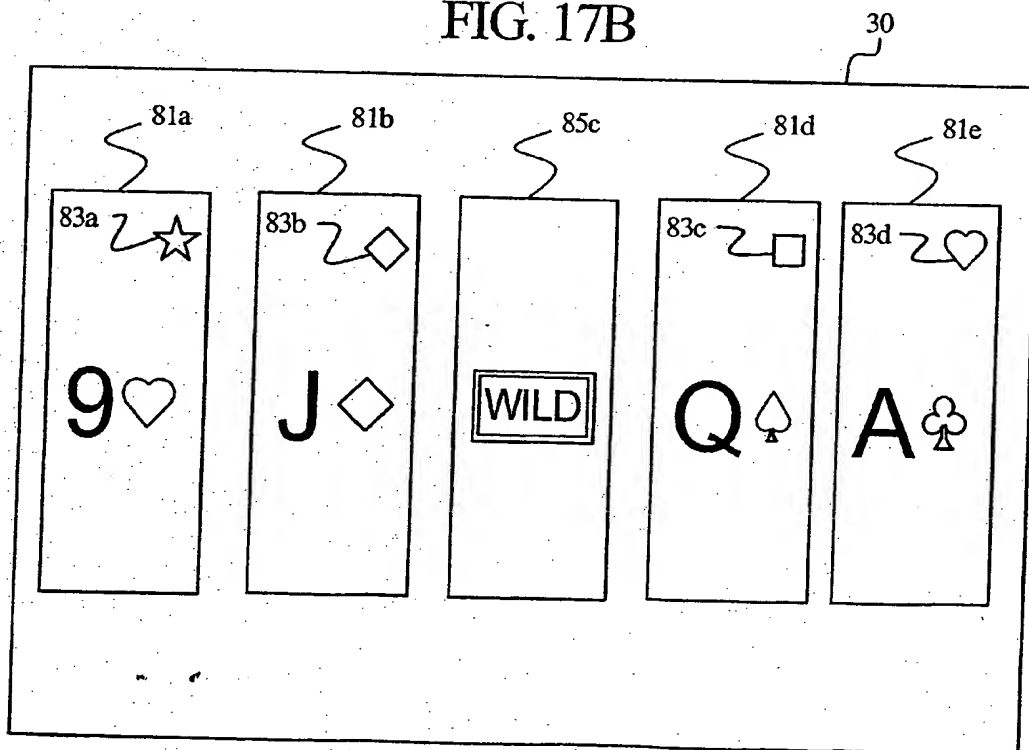


FIG. 17B



**This Page is Inserted by IFW Indexing and Scanning
Operations and is not part of the Official Record**

BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images include but are not limited to the items checked:

- ☒ **BLACK BORDERS**
- ☐ **IMAGE CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES**
- ☐ **FADED TEXT OR DRAWING**
- ☐ **BLURRED OR ILLEGIBLE TEXT OR DRAWING**
- ☐ **SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES**
- ☐ **COLOR OR BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS**
- ☐ **GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS**
- ☐ **LINES OR MARKS ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT**
- ☐ **REFERENCE(S) OR EXHIBIT(S) SUBMITTED ARE POOR QUALITY**
- ☐ **OTHER:** _____

IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

As rescanning these documents will not correct the image problems checked, please do not report these problems to the IFW Image Problem Mailbox.

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO: